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Intertwining Discourse:
An Examination of Suffrage and Antisuffrage Rhetoric

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Introduction

Rhetorical history has long been considered a history that only pertains to men, about men. According to historians such as Joy Richie, Kate Ronald, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Gail Collins, and Kathryn Cullen-DuPont, women's rhetoric has largely been overlooked, as there has been, for centuries, a "systematic effort to silence women's voices" (Richie and Ronald xv). Women's voices have collectively been absent throughout Western rhetorical tradition, wherein "men have an ancient and honorable rhetorical history... [and] women have no parallel rhetorical history" (Campbell 1).

For centuries, women had only existed, both physically and rhetorically, in the shadows of public history. However, this changed dramatically in the nineteenth century, a time defined by expansion, reform, and change. Continental expansion was a defining aspect of the United States, with "approximately 350,000 Americans cross[ing] the continent" between 1845 and 1865 (DuBois and Dumenil 252). The expansion and reconstruction of the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century parallels the fact that "women were reconstructing their lives in these years as well" (DuBois and Dumenil 325). These years created an era for women defined by female assertion, unparalleled accomplishment, and an untouched discourse that segued into the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 that allowed women voting rights.

This thesis will analyze the rhetoric for and about women between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in relation to suffrage rhetoric. In my opinion, this era, defined as the first wave of feminism, perpetuates a discourse that initiated women's public rhetorical history. Thus, the aim of this paper is to restore an often overlooked portion of the history of women, namely the rhetoric of the women's suffrage movement. Two distinct yet oddly similar discourses arose during this time: one suffrage and one antisuffrage.

Both discourses claimed to help, protect, preserve, and save women and their rights. In the early part of the nineteenth century, “two distinct subcultures emerged:” one for men and one for women (Campbell 10). Man’s place was a world outside of the home, in the public realm of politics and ambition. Woman’s place was a world in the home, in the private realm of domesticity and servitude. Ultimately, suffrage rhetoric wanted to enhance women’s lives by expanding their subculture, and antisuffrage rhetoric wanted to protect women’s lives by honoring their subculture. Both rhetorics revolved around a mindset that was for women. However, they expressed their goals and eventual ends in two opposing ways: suffrage literature believed women could do something significant outside the home. They admired the ‘new woman’ who was not afraid to depart from a submissive and homebound role. The suffragists challenged traditional feminine roles by claiming that women could handle greater moral, economic, and legal responsibility, affirming women’s inherent equality with men. While focusing on the ballot, suffragists believed in justice and equality. In stark opposition, the antisuffragists clung to an idealized view of women that had been in place for centuries: a view where women occupied a place as proud ruler of the home and only the home. They constantly fixated on the theme of true womanhood and how entering the political area would sully and soil her virtuous and delicate nature. Antisuffragists argued that a woman wanting the ballot was an insult to her husband. The antisuffragists wanted to preserve and protect women, while the suffragists wanted to give her freedom. With two very differing rhetorics and goals with the same aim, they used different strategies and arguments claiming the same fundamental ideology and stance on women.

This paper is a rhetorical analysis of suffrage rhetoric by and about women at this time, comparing the strategic arguments that both discourses used. Chapter One gives a historical overview of suffrage literature and discusses three of the most common arguments that

advocated for the votes of women: a natural rights argument, a separate sphere argument, and a capability argument. Chapter Two gives an overview of antisuffrage literature and demonstrates that antisuffragists also used three kinds of primary arguments to combat women's voting rights: a preservation of family life argument, women are inherently physically and mentally fragile argument, and their version of a separate spheres argument that stated the fact that women are biologically different than men argument. While many arguments emerged, I analyze three of the most common with each discourse. The two discourses constantly played off of one another, interweaving arguments and mentalities. However, even though suffrage rhetoric triumphed, antisuffrage rhetoric exposes a discounted yet abundant testimony to the cultural beliefs in the United States.

The exuberant young America in the nineteenth century was a time of innovation, social evolution, and change. The turn of the century brought ideas that had been previously seen as impossible, stimulated by inventions such as the sewing machine, locomotive, printing press, automatic reaper, and telegraph (Bellis). Everywhere, it seemed as if people were inspired to change the world they lived in for the better: socially, economically, politically, and intellectually. A thirst for knowledge emerged, with progress in almost every aspect of human life increasing. And yet, women were left out from this equation, only able to peer at this changing world from behind household curtains. In spite of the thrilling opportunities for action in the outside world, woman's sphere was in the home, where, as a "humble and retired individual in the shade of domestic duties, it was believed she could yield to society the greatest returns" (Brigance 153). Women were seen as submissive to men, especially their husbands. Women were seen as the weaker sex in almost every regard. Women had a completely different life experience and expectations than men. Only valued for their purity and virtue, they were unable to obtain an education, vote or voice their opinion in any political sense, and were seen

strictly as childbearers who kept the peace of the household. Her training from childbirth taught the antebellum woman that marriage was the crowning jewel of her life; women were well versed in domestic aspects such as sewing, tea, and social gatherings, but not much more.

If the entire classification of a woman during this time were to be defined by a short phrase, it would be the “Cult of True Womanhood” (Welter 151). This ideology, also called the “Cult of Domesticity” stated that women’s nature suited her for tasks only related to the home. Consequently, women were often hostages of their own households. This term, which surfaced in the nineteenth century, encompasses a collection of attitudes that a “true” woman was essentially virtuous. Perfect women were pure, pious, submissive, and domestic; “put them all together and they spell mother, daughter, sister, wife,” indicating that these were the only roles that women could participate in (Hogeland 104). Thus, women were ill-suited for the rough and tumble of political life. This domestic ideal limited women’s aspirations, created a model for life that was unfulfilling and stressful as it was virtually impossible to live up to, and it restricted women’s potential, according to suffragists. To antisuffragists, the “Cult Of True Womanhood” encompassed the crucial importance of the family and provided protection that women not only needed but also deserved. The opposing rhetorical discourses during this time hold two opposing views on the “Cult of True Womanhood.” The suffragists, for the most part, viewed it as a restriction and the antisuffragists viewed it as a necessity. However, some suffragists honored and respected the differing gender spheres in society and used them to their advantage.

Women suffragists had to fight against a society that had continued to suppress her, especially in relation to economics. Although the Industrial Era was defined by a steady transformation of women being integrated into the employment and labor world, women’s economic experiences remained extremely distinct from men’s. Salaries for women were “about half, sometimes two-thirds, of what were paid to men holding corresponding positions”

(Brigance 154). In 1870, only fifteen percent of free women held jobs (Kleinberg 105). Despite the rising educational level for women, wages were substantially lower than her male coworkers. Regardless of where she lived, women's employment status fluctuated greatly with age, unlike men's. Men generally entered the work force much earlier than women and stayed in it throughout their lives. Most women left gainful employment when they married, typically by the age of 25 (Kleinberg 107). During the turn of the century, rising levels of married women's employment coincided with the sharp decline of child labor with the rise of child labor laws. The literature of this era emphasizes this lack of women in the workforce; one such example includes Laura Ingalls Wilder's mother, who taught school for one term in the 1860s before she ceased working when she married a fur trapper. After this point, all of the family income came from the father, with the mother's income no longer needed.

In 1870, six out of every ten workingwomen were servants while almost none (less than one in one hundred) held clerical, secretarial, or sales positions (Kleinberg 111). At this time, only six percent of women held professional occupations. Employers preferred women workers for service positions, as they were thought to be more polite, well-behaved, soft spoken, and delicate. Not only this, but they were also perceived to be easier to control than young men and cheaper to employ. Thus, by 1920, over one quarter of all women held clerical professions. Dressmakers earned anywhere from thirty-three to fifty cents a day; a teacher in summer school "boarded around and was paid one dollar a week (Brigance 154). Sadly, what she did earn often belonged to her husband by right of legal control.

The ideology of this era defined true womanhood as "exclusively domestic" (Dubois and Dumenil 188). During this time, it was common to believe that most women were completely devoted to the home, as "women were either pregnant or nursing and caring for infants" in the nineteenth century (Dubois and Dumenil 255). While there was a growing presence of women in

political and economical matters, their roles as mothers, wives, and housekeepers trumped all, with their lives revolving around the family and home life. Housewifery and childbearing was not considered work but instead “as an effortless expression of women’s feminine natures” (Dubois and Dumenil 188). Mothers were expected to devote themselves entirely to their household. By 1890, the average white women had four children (Kleinberg 140). During this time, men could sue their wives for “disregarding their wifely obligations” (Kleinberg 142). The Census Bureau’s study of divorce between 1868 and 1906 indicated that almost four-fifths of the male petitioners felt their wives “were not properly submissive, did not fulfill their female duties, or tired to assert their autonomy” (Kleinberg 142). Gradually, activists began to reform the laws denied by women, “especially their economic rights” (Dubois and Dumenil 278).

Amelia Johnson dedicated her entire novel *The Hazeley Family*, published in 1894, to the ideal that “a happy home is the acme of human bliss,” limiting women’s work to sweeping, dusting, cooking, and “brightening and making [the home] cheery to both word and deed” (Johnson 45). The cult of domesticity had women “willingly [turning] the key on their own prison” (Baym 27). Due to the Industrial Revolution and the post-antebellum period after the Civil War, men working longer hours outside of the home translated into woman’s primary role in childrearing. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, published by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1892, showcases the burdensome placed upon women, as the female narrator demonstrates the effects of these scathing restraints.

African-American women during this time were far more restricted in almost every aspect of life. Unlike white middle class women, a large portion of African-American women worked outside of the home: “after emancipation, African-American women tried to devote themselves to their families by withdrawing from field labor, but poverty and pressure from white land owners forced them into the fields” (Kleinberg 106). African-American women held

higher levels of employment yet a narrower range of job opportunities compared to other racial groups, with “two-fifths holding jobs in 1880 and 1920, almost all in agriculture or domestic service” (Kleinberg 107). African-American women also stayed in the work force after marriage at a much larger percentage than white women. In 1900, about “three percent of white and twenty-six percent of black married women had jobs” (Kleinberg 109). These discrepancies between race were even greater for older women-older black women were much more likely to have jobs. In 1900, 38.8% of African-American women over the age of forty-five had jobs opposed to 10% percent of white women of the same age (Kleinberg 111). This larger proportion of women in the workforce did not translate to a wider range of jobs available, however, as less than one percent of “non-white women had clerical jobs in 1890” (Kleinberg 112). Many African-American women had to take the jobs that Caucasian women left behind. Moreover, tobacco companies used black women to undertake jobs similar to those performed by slaves before emancipation. Thus, new laws and political participation was even more vital for African-American women, as their role was even more limited in society.

Both suffragists and antisuffragists discussed education in relation to voting rights. Education, or the lack thereof, defined a woman during this time. In 1860, one issue of *The Saturday Review* blankly stated, “The great argument against the existence of this equality of intellect in women is that it does not exist” (Kleinberg 152). These negative attitudes are manifested in the opposing literature for the rights of women that are present throughout the Industrial Era. In 1870, the percent of white females between the ages of five and nineteen was significantly lower than the 56 percent of white males in school (Kleinberg 152). Despite this, the reappraisal of social and cultural norms relating to education prompted a reevaluation of women’s roles. By 1890, the number of institutions of higher education had doubled and over three fifths of colleges accepted female applicants. At the turn of the century, almost all

publically funded institutions of higher education took women, albeit many demanded higher entry qualifications (Kleinberg 156). Thus, education, in general, became an important question surrounding women, which both suffragists and antisuffragists included in their discourse. Furthermore, African-American women had to fight double the setbacks due to both their skin color and their race. The rhetoric of Maria W. Stewart and Sojourner Truth had a powerful effect on the audience due to the fact that both women had no formal education (as well as the fact that Truth was illiterate) yet were knowledgeable enough to question social authority of the time.

The analysis of my thesis begins here, where women began to enter public discourse. Women's rhetoric was a catalyst that sparked a change in history. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that "women's voices were [no longer] disregarded" (Cullen-DuPont xxv). The history of American women "is about the fight for freedom," and this fight, and thus the rhetoric by and for women, skyrocketed between the years 1848 and 1919 (Collins xiv). Before the Seneca Falls Convention, which is known by scholars as the birth of the women's rights movement where "woman's rights activism took an organized form," women rhetors were virtually unheard of (Campbell 4). Thus, the canon of women's rhetoric, both by and for women, was virtually nonexistent. Throughout most of Western history, rhetoric has been dominated by men, shaped by male ideals, male agendas, male contests, and male issues.

This exclusion of women from both society and rhetoric suddenly shifted when the idea of women's suffrage festered and grew as the nineteenth century saw "femininity and rhetorical action" as "mutually exclusive" (Campbell 9). A surge of pro-women, suffrage rhetoric emerged that fought for the extension of voting rights to be granted towards women. However, just as the efforts of suffragists championed the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, they were plagued by a pushback of antisuffrage rhetoric, creating two opposing discourses with two completely contradicting end goals, both claiming that they had women's best interest at heart. While

scholars frequently expose the successes of suffrage rhetoric, its antisuffrage counterpoint prospered as well. While by modern standards the proliferation of suffrage rhetoric seems indisputable and obvious, the subsequent surge of antisuffrage rhetoric hindered the success of the movement by more than fifty years. The arguments used by suffrage and antisuffrage rhetors attempted to change the way people viewed women. Three common arguments used by suffragists, a natural rights argument, a separate sphere argument, and a capability argument, developed an inventive rhetoric that reached new audiences, set up the possibility for change in voting rights, and plugged in doubt in an antisuffrage mentality. While both scholars as well as the general public know suffragists as icons of United States history, antisuffrage rhetors and discourse are not in circulation and are thus lost in rhetorical history. People are familiar with suffrage women and rhetoric, with these women serving as pioneers in history. What many people do not realize is the hard pushback that came with suffrage rhetoric, as it is often discarded from history. Thus, this thesis looks at the relationship between the two discourses as a part of rhetorical history. The discarded antisuffrage rhetoric nearly overpowered its counterpart in the battle for women's suffrage with its three common arguments: preservation of family life argument, women's supposed inherent physical and mental fragility, and the belief that women biologically differed from men. This thesis is an examination of the rhetoric surrounding women's voting rights, exposing the fact that suffragists and antisuffragists used different arguments that had the same aim: to help, aid, and protect women.

Chapter One: Suffrage Arguments And History

Suffrage rhetoric that emerged in the nineteenth century depended on the foundational idea that suffragists were advocating for women and women's rights. Many suffrage women rhetors appropriated whatever rhetorical means they knew in order to argue for the right to speak, and they also "subverted conventional rhetoric by using traditional means to argue for radical goals" (Ritchie and Ronald xxiv). Women suffragists were the David in a Goliath of a battle; suffragists had to alter social norms that had been in place for centuries. While the literature that emerged had to attack and discount these norms from a multitude of different arguments, three emerged as the most common: a natural rights argument, a separate sphere argument, and a capability argument, all of which advocated change by permitting women the right to vote.

One of the earliest and primary arguments made for women's suffrage was a natural rights one, claiming that under existing legal documents, specifically the Declaration of Independence, defined by "constitutional rights" that the founding fathers strived for, voting rights were extended to all peoples, including women. This argument stems from John Locke that holds the ideal "tyranny has stimulated breakthrough thinking about liberty" (Powell). This is an argument that spanned for almost seventy years, which can be found in lengthy discourses and addresses spoken at conferences to one-line utterances written in newspapers or signs at political rallies. In looking at a few specific examples of the natural rights argument, "The Declaration of Sentiments" by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1848, "Woman's Rights To Suffrage" by Susan B. Anthony in 1873, and "Address to the Congress on Women's Suffrage" by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1917, one can see that this argument spanned the history of suffrage rhetoric, paving the way for female suffrage.

The basis of this rhetorical strategy lies in patriotic ideals present in the Revolutionary War. Less than a century before, in the United States' Declaration of Independence, a philosophy laid out natural rights granted to people of the United States. This particular argument held that women should "vote because they were men's equals and therefore should have political rights equal to those of men" (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith, 529). This sentiment is reiterated in Susan B. Anthony's testimony, which describes how she was persecuted in fighting for what she believed was a natural right granted to her. In 1872, Anthony was arrested for voting, and her testimony exclaimed, "There is no reason, no argument, nothing but prejudice, against our demand," referencing the rationale behind a natural rights argument by inferring the irrational argument against female suffrage (Cooney 23). Anthony argues that the "natural right" of her suffrage request is straightforward and already inherently granted, and thus it should be given to women.

After being denied the right to attend the Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, suffrage activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott shifted their attention to women's rights and devoted the rest of their lives to improving the status of women in America, beginning with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The Convention was one of the first public, large-scale moments in history relating to this growing reform; as the enfranchisement movement stemmed from the nineteenth-century abolitionist and temperance movements, women had already acquired skills necessary to orchestrate a social and political reform. These skills included "present[ing] arguments in a comfortable, familiar language that made both women and men amenable to new ideas and evidence...The great strength of temperance leaders was their ability to meld a progressive message with a rhetorical presentation and image comfortable to a large number of women and men" (Mattingly 1-2). All in all, temperance women helped convince "the 'average woman' of the need for woman's suffrage" (Mattingly 8).

During the nineteenth century, "a major impetus toward woman suffrage came from an unexpected source-the temperance movement" (Campbell 5). Consequently, many women came into activism via the temperance movement, which began under the ideology that state legislatures needed to control the liquor trade. Female temperance crusaders believed men's drinking threatened the sanctity of the family and the home; it was also a way of asserting cultural hegemony in a rapidly changing world. The suffrage movement and the temperance movement are very closely tied, both making extreme strides in the span of a few months after fighting for over fifty years to fight for their argument: the government officially prohibited the sale of alcohol with the 18th Amendment in January 1920 and women received the right to vote with the Nineteenth Amendment in August of the same year. Women's involvement in the temperance movement began as early as the 1840s. In time, several temperance organizers also became women's rights advocates after concluding, "that without political power they had little

hope of accomplishing their goals” (O’Dea 659). Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were all early temperance leaders who then crossed over into women’s rights issues. The Second Wave of the temperance movement lasted from 1872 to 1893, a time crucial to both abolition and suffrage. Slowly, the temperance movement began to include advocacy for women’s rights. The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), under the leadership of Frances Willard from 1879 to 1898, was an extension of women’s rights. Under Willard’s jurisdiction, the aims of the WCTU were broadened to include labor reform, social purity (antiprostitution), and, most importantly, women suffrage. Thus, a growing number of women’s organizations “prepared to exert pressure either directly or indirectly on the political processes” (Paulson 118). The crossovers of both temperance and suffrage included intellectual and financial leadership centered on “older, established areas such as the eastern section of the United States” (Paulson 120). One of the temperance movement’s achievements was bringing women out of the home and paving a way for women to speak publically in large settings. “Conservative temperance women who had once questioned the need for the vote began to see its importance,” and thus women felt more comfortable speaking their concerns (Giele 104). What linked both temperance and enfranchisement was their “link to Protestant values and democratic individualism” (Giele 2). Temperance oriented towards the enhancement of traditional feminine role of wife and mother. The temperance movement was the earliest and largest single constituency to support the ballot for women. Women helped “enable their governments to destroy the liquor traffic” (Timberlake 122). Consequently, women helped change history, and thus paved a foundation for suffrage rhetors. Most of those who supported woman suffrage believed that the woman’s vote would be a power for good and would help bring about progression legislation and reform, including prohibition. The interrelated factors of both temperance and suffrage are the beginnings of the women’s suffrage movement, with the

temperance movement offering “an ideal vehicle for speaking about women’s concerns,” creating an avenue for women to speak about suffrage (Mattingly 13).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton began activism in the temperance movement, but slowly “deserted temperance organizations” and segued into suffrage activism (Mattingly 22). With her activism in the temperance movement, Stanton had a public speaking background that prepared her to become a leader of women’s suffrage. Stanton made the natural rights argument in her “Declaration of Sentiments,” a document that demanded rights for women and that society acknowledge these rights. Early women activists utilized and interwove numerous arguments and strategies into their speeches and discourses in order to more broadly reach their audience, as gender equality was a radical ideal that most of the population was opposed to at its origins. Specifically, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 tackled an abundance of different issues, such as whether women should be able to be involved in medicine or politics, the double standard of women shamed for having sex before marriage, the perception that women who spoke their minds were masculine, sexual character, education, etc.

While Wollstonecraft’s commentary on how women were treated was composed of thirteen chapters that were comprised of multiple different arguments, almost fifty years later, Stanton’s entire “Declaration of Sentiments” relied on one argument: the lack of justice given to women (Dubois and Dumenil A18-A21). Her argument relied on these injustices to resonate with a mid-nineteenth century audience. Stanton’s “Declaration” evoked republican principles of “equal citizenship rights, individual liberty, and the consent of the governed” (Kraditor 97). Suffragists using this strategy contended that women were entitled to political, economic, and judicial equality with men by virtue of their shared humanity. In paralleling the American Revolution to female suffrage, they voiced that restricting the ballot paralleled the British violation of democratic principles that the United States was founded upon, specifically a

“without representation” argument. Thus, any state that honors the founding principles of the United States and its republican ideals must extend the vote to women.

The “Declaration of Sentiments” included eighteen grievances of women that parallel the colonists’ original grievances against the antagonist British rule. Moreover, the two documents almost exactly parallel: the first paragraph describing the cause of action, a second paragraph describing how citizens are created equal and there are certain unalienable rights that should be permitted and that governments should never violate, a long history of abuses, and a conclusion of denouncing their own tyrants. The “Declaration of Sentiments” states:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. (Dubois and Dumenil A18)

All but two words, “and women,” directly quote the “Declaration of Independence,” an ironic eye-opening call to the atrocities that men place upon women. In fact, the only major rhetorical changes Stanton makes are two or three words at a time: “that *all men and women* are created equal,” instead of “that *all men* are created equal,” “...such as been the patient sufferance *of the women* under this government,” instead of “such as been the patient sufferance *of these Colonies*,” and “an absolute tyranny *over her*,” instead of “an absolute tyranny *over these States*” (Dubois and Dumenil A18-A19). Stanton coyly shifted word choice in order to create a lasting effect on her audience; her shifts emphasize the tyrannical nature of denying women enfranchisement. The inclusion of women’s suffrage into the rhetoric of the “Declaration of Independence” creates an obvious treacherous act in the exclusion of the natural rights for

women she calls for, showcasing how barbaric the exclusion of women from political life truly was.

This sentiment became the first formal statement of the women's suffrage movement, listing the injustices that women endured, including the fact that women were the objects of mistreatment by man. Man denied her the right to vote, forced her to submit to laws where she has no voice, withheld rights and representation, enacted laws that enable marriage to make her civilly dead, taken away her property, allowed divorce laws causing her to lose guardianship of her children, allowed the government to tax her property, prevented her access to professions such as law and medicine, denied her equal pay, denied her education, insisted on her subordinate role in the church, established false public sentiment by giving different moral codes to men and women, and claimed it was man's right to assign women to their place. Eleven Resolutions illustrating ideas on how to improve women's lives were then presented and discussed. Her argument relies on the fundamental rhetoric of the founding fathers, creating an argument that encompasses both logic and emotion, as it dictates facts that strip women of rights while simultaneously exposing to women the injustice of such an act. Her descriptions of the injustices of women are blunt attacks on men which both showcase the truths of society and play upon the emotions of women in the audience, illustrated when she exposes the fact that liberties and rights promised by the American Revolution were not extended to an entire half of the population: "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise" (Dubois and Dumenil A19). However, due to the fact that this document is historically known as the founding suffrage piece of literature, it had to be rooted in logical rhetoric more than emotional rhetoric. This is seen in the composition of her discourse, which is not one single long paragraph that stimulated emotion but instead a list of the facts that illustrated injustice. These singular lists of utterances paired with its allusion of Thomas Jefferson's "Declaration of

Independence” craft the Declaration of Sentiments to effectively resonate with her audience, creating one of the first documents that advocated for women’s legal rights. Not only this, but Stanton was denied permission to speak at the world anti-slavery convention eight years prior, thus throughout the “Declaration” she calls forth ideas of freedom. As this was before the Civil War, Stanton revolved her speech within the context of the freedoms granted within the American Revolution, while later works using this argument called forth freedoms granted by the Civil War. As the Convention ended, sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the “Declaration of Rights and Sentiments”, with a feeling of “elevat[ion] by what had transpired” over the two days residing over both the audience and the organizers of the convention. (McMillen 95). This patriotic, natural rights argument was one of the most effectual, in my opinion, as it relished in the obvious contradictions that came with denying women enfranchisement in relation to already existing legal documents.

With this assertion of natural rights rhetoric, women derived “the franchise from their status as citizens, and suffragists presented their cause as an effort to secure and protect the vote as a right that was already theirs, not as an attempt to acquire new rights” (Vacca 128). The natural rights argument was rooted in citizenship and the rights that are, or should be, granted to citizens. As such, there was a surge in the use of the word “citizen” in suffrage discourses, beginning in Stanton’s “Declaration” with “having deprived her this right of a *citizen*” and “rights and privileges which belong to them as *citizens* of the United States” (Dubois and Dumenil A19). She uses the word twice in her discourse; Susan B. Anthony, speaking almost twenty-five years later, uses the word citizen seven times in her much shorter document, indicating that the natural rights argument pertaining to citizenship grew stronger and was effective to a later nineteenth century audience.

Similar to Stanton, Susan B. Anthony also uses a patriotic, natural rights philosophy in her rhetoric in her speech, “Woman’s Rights to Suffrage” in 1873, stemming from an argument based on natural citizenship in which she expounds upon her unjust circumstance (Safire 694-695). On November 5th, 1872, Anthony cast a ballot in the presidential election in her hometown of Rochester, New York, although women were prohibited from doing so. Two weeks later, she was arrested, and the following year, she was found guilty of illegal voting in a widely publicized trial.

When comparing the set-up of Stanton and Anthony’s discourses, Stanton’s “Declaration” was composed of over twenty distinct paragraphs, creating a discourse that was disjointed and stark. In direct contrast, Anthony’s speech, composed of only six paragraphs that reads as a testimony instead of a list, flows more smoothly, evoking emotion more than realization in her audience. She begins by stating, “I stand before you tonight...” creating conversational rhetoric that directly opposes the list structure Stanton uses (Safire 694). With this, she sets up a discourse that will emotionally connect with her audience. In the first paragraph, Anthony states that, after being convicted of the “alleged crime of having voted at the last presidential election...I not only committed no crime, but instead simply exercised my citizen’s rights, guaranteed to me and all United States citizens by the National Constitution” (Safire 694). Just as Stanton did, Anthony, from the first paragraph of her speech, calls upon patriotic ideals set forth by the Declaration of Independence. This argument is emphasized again when Anthony states, “It is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government-the ballot,” using extremely straightforward and confrontational rhetoric to manifest her point of inequality (Safire 694). She uses the word “we” six times in one short paragraph to indicate that men *as well as women* have the right to be

involved in politics in the United States: “It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union” (Safire 694).

Anthony ends her discourse with one of the most resonating sentences of the natural rights argument that suffragists use. She states, “Are women persons?”, thus posing the question of citizenship (Safire 695). Anthony broadened the suffrage movement to more frequently utilize the word citizen that highlighted the injustice of excluding women from legal voting rights.

Thus, Anthony expanded the movement to include women under the word “citizen,” indicating that they were granted the same rights. Stanton exposed a discourse that stated women are humans; Anthony continues this line of argument. Anthony uses the term more frequently as it was a term that men were comfortable with and thus defines women with this familiar term.

Thus, Anthony’s use of it is a commentary of the changing mindset and growing adaptability of the American public. These two pieces of rhetoric bridged the gap between the rights present in America that were a direct result of the Declaration of Independence and the vote that women adamantly desired. Not only did Anthony’s testimony expand suffrage discourse in a more logical and direct way, but it also is a demonstration of the massive change in American history, specifically the Civil War and the consequential emancipation of slaves. Thus, Anthony uses more poignant rhetoric that dictates how suffrage should be granted to all citizens, commenting on the ideals of the Civil War. While Stanton’s discourse used diction that focused on the Revolutionary War, Anthony’s progression of the use of the word “citizen” shows the historical change in American history. The Fifteenth Amendment allowed all men, including black men, to vote. Thus, she transitions from the Republican principles of the American Revolution to citizenship that came with the Civil War. It was hard for women, many of whom were abolitionists, to see this right granted; Anthony’s speech is a testimony on the hardships that

women felt to see that the male slaves they sought to liberate were now offered voting rights when their own voting rights were nowhere in sight.

The natural rights argument carried for over sixty years, up to the years directly before the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment. Carrie Chapman Catt delivered a speech in November of 1917 in Washington DC titled “Address to the Congress on Women’s Suffrage,” in which she used vital natural rights arguments that paralleled Stanton’s “Declaration of Sentiments” seventy years prior (Torricelli 39-43).

Catt’s entire first paragraph is dedicated to the foundation of the United States and the “tyrannical” rule she overcame, a word she uses five times in her speech. Using the foundations of both the American Revolution and of the Civil War, Catt poses the question, “How can our nation escape the logic it has never failed to follow, when its last un-enfranchised class calls for the vote?” (Torricelli 40). The strategy of paralleling the current situation of enfranchisement to the past wars not only establishes the fight for suffrage as a war currently brewing but also illustrates the vitality of the women’s suffrage movement. Her natural rights argument is rooted in history, giving multiple examples as to why “women suffrage is inevitable” (Torricelli 39). Such reasons include, “the history of our country,” which encompasses ideals from the American Revolution (“Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed”), Abraham Lincoln (“Ours is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”), and Woodrow Wilson (“We are fighting...for democracy”) (Torricelli 39-43). Not only does Catt frame her argument within multiple war references, but she also uses democratic examples to showcase how tyrannical the United States was on this issue. Most major nations, especially the ones she references, were still led by monarchies. Yet the United States, who was the first to implement democracy in the modern era, still did not allow women to vote. Even Russia, who had been under provisional government after the Tsar’s abdication, allowed women to vote.

Thus, Catt exposes the illusion that the United States has allowed. She questions how the United States looks in front of her allies. Her beginning paragraph exposes these contradictions: “the suffrage for women already established in the United States makes women suffrage for the nation inevitable” (Torricelli 39). Toward the middle of her speech, Catt furthers this exposition when she states:

Our nation cannot long continue a condition under which government in half its territory rests upon the consent of half of the people and in the other half upon the consent of all the people; a condition which grants representation to the taxed in half of its territory and denies it in the other half a condition which permits women in some states to share in the election of the president, senators, and representatives and denies them that privilege in others. (Torricelli 40)

In this paragraph, Catt furthers Anthony’s natural rights argument with her use of “citizen” by more intensely emphasizing how barbaric denying women, who consist of half of the population, voting rights truly was. Catt follows this paragraph with four distinct questions she poses to her male audience, beginning with “Do you realize...” that expose the “anomalies” that come with denying women voting rights (Torricelli 41). In this, she speaks directly to the men that oppose suffrage exposing their inherent atrocious reasons for denying women the right to vote. These direct violations of justice, which she describes as “outrageous discrimination[s],” are further exposed when she states, “Our ‘Americanisms’ have become the issue of great war” (Torricelli 40). She pairs this audacity with statements such as, “the government of Great Britain has not only pledged votes...to its women...this measure will apply to England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and all the smaller British islands,” “Canada too has enfranchised the women of all its

provinces,” “Russia is no exception,” and “France has pledged votes to its women.” She also mentions “Prague” and “even autocratic Germany” (Torricelli 39-43). Her list of over ten countries that have granted, or will soon grant, women the right to vote disgraces the United States from its role as a respected democracy, appealing to a patriotic audience that treasures the values that the country holds dear as well as exposing the hypocrisies of American exceptionalism. Her passionate and poignant rhetoric is needed in the years directly before women were allowed to vote; her passion manifests the changing mindset of the United States. When Catt states, “no other country in the world with democratic tendencies,” the ‘democratic tendencies’ she references refer to the Declaration of Independence and the constitutional, republican foundations that the United States is founded upon (Torricelli 41). Catt reveals that the government of the United States is not following its own laws. Catt’s acknowledgement to other countries and their respective democratic governments channels the fact that the United States was in the midst of World War I, and thus Catt uses this to her advantage. She progresses from using the word “citizen” to the word “democracy,” also indicating the shift in American history. She channels Wilson’s Congressional speech with her use of the word “democracy,” which she uses thirty-five times in her speech, showcasing the audacity of this injustice.

The natural rights argument was implicit in much of suffrage discourse; it never went away, and it surveyed through the years between 1848 up into 1919. Suffragists relied on a “justice master frame that permeated the culture during America’s revolutionary years” (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 532). This type of argument was prominent in much of the early suffragist arguments, as in “nearly 1,000 speeches...the justice frame was used in just over half of all instances” (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 521). The “master frame” that McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith reference the emergence of a rhetoric that was completely revolutionary for its time, thus creating a “master” rhetoric. This argument is seen in rhetoric

throughout the women suffrage movement, even in short sentences exclamations. For example, throughout the 1870s, suffragists would display banners proclaiming, “Taxation without representation is tyranny,” an ideal that arose in the 1750s and 1760s on the brink of the American Revolution. Statements such as this aroused feelings of patriotism within both men and women almost one hundred years later. The effectiveness of this rhetorical strategy of calling upon historical patriotic documents is one of the strongest arguments used by suffragists and paved the way for social and political reform. A.M.V. Davenport stated in 1897, “We do not wish to be regarded as the superior of men...and we refuse to be regarded as his inferior. All we ask is that we be treated as his equal” (NAWSA edition 1897). Davenport illustrates the inherent rights that women possess due to the rhetoric of the Declaration. Anna Howard Shaw used this argument as well when she stated, “the disenfranchisement of any human being because of sex is an absolute injustice” (NAWSA edition 1911).

The presence of the natural rights argument spans across the entirety of suffrage discourse. While the argument itself was steadfast, the rhetoric slowly grew more emotional. While not losing its logic, suffragists incorporated more emotion, specifically from Stanton to Anthony to Catt, a technique that indicates that the argument was becoming more effective with a wider audience. It slowly could rely more on emotion to appeal to audiences because the women’s rights movement was becoming more accepted. Consequently, instead of actually exposing the injustices and listing them, suffragists could now detail stories and examples of how women were being persecuted, as one can see through Susan B. Anthony’s testimony. The repeated use of this rhetoric throughout the entire fight indicates the apparent simplicity of granting women enfranchisement. However, within the movement, suffragists argued their end goal of suffrage in many different ways. Many suffragists felt uncomfortable with the radical notions of equality that others were fighting for, and thus utilized a different argument to fight

for enfranchisement. Consequently, these suffragists used a sphere argument that reiterated women's natural separation from men while simultaneously arguing for women suffrage.

A women's sphere during this time defined almost every aspect of her life. In an article titled *Quiet Women* appearing in an 1868 issue of *Ladies Repository*, an anonymous author stated, "quiet women are the wine of life" (Johnson 48). Thus, a woman that is brilliant, talkative, enthusiastic, and educated is silenced. In this characterization the ideal woman is, above all, quiet. Despite all of these setbacks, women's place in American culture was expanding greatly, from presence in cinema to role in literature to activism in social causes throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. As females controlled most spending decisions for household items, more advertisers targeted a female audience, allowing them control in financial situations. Charles Dana Gibson's "Gibson Girl" in the late 1890s also reformed the ideal woman, epitomizing a new woman who moved beyond the confines of the previous era's corsets and restrictive dress. These new forms of entertainment paired with a growing education engendered social and political activism.

With all of the aspects that encompassed the ideal of the "Cult of True Womanhood," there was no doubt there were two different spheres in United States' life: one to men and one to women. While the majority of suffragists sought to destroy what they perceived as barriers to their political emancipation, many suffragists were still uncomfortable with the radical rhetoric that many suffragists were making. The ideal of suffrage was often not as popular as anticipated, with many "older American men were questioning the validity of the principle of consent of the governed as it applied to the new immigrants" (Kraditor 44). As most people in the United States who were following the women's rights rhetoric, including the suffragists themselves, were Anglo-Saxon, white, native born, Protestant, middle class people, they were scared of the broad word "citizen" and thus needed another argument to relay information. Thus, many

women used a separate spheres argument in order to express political freedom. With hesitancy in society, the audience, as well as in the suffragists themselves to this emerging radical discourse, a more conservative, traditional rhetoric that emphasized the natural separation of the sexes emerged.

Often incorporating religion, this argument used women's natural place as a mother to their advantage to gain women enfranchisement, praising the differences of men and women set forth by society. This rationale revolved around men and women's differences; this difference justified women's voting rights. Thus, suffragists that used this argument expressed that permitting women to vote would benefit society, as women would provide insight that men simply could not provide themselves with their gender difference. Given their more womanly qualities, including a gentle nature, humane outlook, and focus on motherhood and family life, society would benefit from women's entrance into politics and legislature. Placing the vote in women's hands would result in reforms to protect children, families, homes, schools, etc. Many suffragists adamantly opposed this type of argument: Stanton asserted the unfairness of evaluating woman's sphere based on the restrictions placed upon women such as "mother, wife, sister, daughter" on the fact that women were not branded similarly with father, husband, brother, or son in her "Solitude of Self" speech in 1892 (Keetley and Pettegrew 7). However, this women's sphere argument paralleled the hesitations that were present in society. This argument, while much less prominent in suffrage discourse, mirrored the worry of many antisuffragists and thus bridged a gap between the two opposing notions of women. The main suffragists that used these arguments include Isabella Beecher Hooker and Lucretia Mott, but this discourse was present in numerous pieces of literature.

Rhetoric that used this argument was sporadically spread throughout suffrage literature. In 1910, the North Dakota Woman's Christian Temperance Union stated, "government is merely

national housekeeping...what a nation needs...is voters who know more about housekeeping (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 533). Rebecca Henry Hayes stated, “let the women vote...and they would help these good men to clean out and purify the political brothels of our land;” this housekeeping type of rhetoric enforced gender roles and attempted to show society how they could be used to benefit the political world (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 533). Thus, this argument supported the notion that women had value in the home and this value is applicable outside of it as well, therefore women could play a vital role in society and no longer be placed on the back burner.

Punch, a weekly magazine, published an article by John Stuart Mill in 1867. A polite yet articulate female character concludes that she would rather not be enfranchised, content to wielding power behind the scenes. She asks, “Why should we wish to exercise power through the franchise, when we are already omnipotent over those who have the franchise?” (Wallach). This question encompasses the fears that many women held, and thus many suffragists used this fear to their advantage by reinforcing the notion that men and women were inherently different and inhabited spate spheres. This created a discourse that was slightly more reasonable to people who were timid about joining the radical movement.

Throughout the movement, suffragists strove to uphold the seemingly contradictory goals of obtaining citizenship rights of enfranchisement while simultaneously maintaining cultural gender expectations while benefitting society. Thus, the contributions to society “justify the right of women as compensation for their roles as mothers and wives” (Hurner 243). This strategy was frequently demonstrated through song. A song advocating suffrage by L. May Wheeler called “Uncle Sam’s Wedding” depicts a scene where ‘Uncle Sam’ “sets up his house,” and “a keeper he must find him,” extending women’s domestic skills to help ‘keep the home’ (Crew 102). Wheeler argued that wanting to elevate women’s political voice would not eradicate her

primary duties of tending to the home but instead, by reaffirming traditional male and female roles in the song, Wheeler also wanted to “broaden the definition of home to include the nation” (Hurner 244). Another song, “Give the Ballot to the Mothers,” reiterates the fact that women voters are still, first and foremost, mothers, dedicated to their family and will not succumb fully to the political life. Thus, suffrage and antisuffrage arguments almost spoke directly to one another, playing to each other’s hesitations. In talking about similar aspects such as the role of women, these two opposing rhetorics create one discourse.

Similarly, in 1883, Isabella Beecher Hooker gave an address titled “The Constitutional Rights of the Women of the United States” before the International Council of Women in Washington DC (Hooker). She states that women “ought to exercise their constitutional right to vote” for the following reason:

Because questions of legislation to-day are largely questions of morals, and men alone are incompetent to deal with the morals of a community, however wise and just they may be, and however honest in their desire to promote the general welfare. Education, secular and religious, temperance, chastity, police regulations, penal institutions and reformatories—who has more interest than women citizens in all these questions, or more wisdom to bring to their solution? (Hooker)

In this opening statement, Hooker establishes that placing women in political life would only enhance multiple aspects of society that are “interests” of women, making a separate sphere argument. Her entire argument as to why women should be allowed to vote hinges upon the different outlook women would bring to politics due to her separation and differences from men. Thus, Hooker plays upon already existing cultural notions of separation and spins them into an

argument that advocates women voting. She herself comments on the gender differences of men, who are “fighters by nature,” creating a much more emotional relationship with her audience by commenting on social norms and playing on traditional roles in society rather than simply stating inflammatory facts, a tactic that Stanton used. Thus, she creates a bond of trust with her audience. Furthermore, many sphere arguments throughout the discourse are rooted in emotion opposed to the natural rights arguments, which are rooted in logic. They use strategies such as asking questions, speaking directly to the audience, and comforting hesitations to create a bond of trust between speaker and audience. For example, she states, “May I ask your patient attention” and “Commit this to memory, friends; learn it by heart as well as by head,” creating an atmosphere that was not stark and attacking but instead reassuring (Hooker). These sphere arguments also use a more conversational form of rhetoric rather than stating direct claims, which is a strategy that natural rights arguments use. Hooker addresses her audience as “friends” eleven times in her address, allowing for more of a friendly, almost motherly, diction that soothes and comforts her audience. This strategy alone reiterates the gender roles of women as caretakers. She also accomplishes a ‘bond of trust’ with her audience in the fact that Hooker continually comments on how women will help enhance and rebuild society. Written in the Gilded Age, Hooker comments on the integrity of society. The Gilded Age was called such because it was a time of incredible political corruption, with political bosses in New York manipulating political outcomes. Thus, Hooker comments on the sanctity of society and the preservation of its values while still allowing women to vote.

Similarly, Lucretia Mott’s *Discourse on Women* spoken in December 1849 expressed how women’s proper place in the home would benefit society if she were allowed political freedom while still affirming her womanhood by adhering to the traditional roles of women in society (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19-36). Mott, while a female suffragist, still felt uncomfortable

with the radical notions of equality; she maintained the sphere belief that already existed, enforcing a separation of the sexes that would protect the status quo already in place. She begins her speech by commenting on the “true and proper position of woman,” rhetoric that is rooted in the gender differences emphasized by society (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19). “Increasing attention to female education...especially in what is called the ‘Ladies’ Department’” would be a way to integrate women into society to ultimately benefit men, Mott claims (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19). She argues for political and legal egalitarianism for women by interweaving conservative religious rhetoric into her argument: “The Bible was a primary source of evidence to justify prohibitions against women’s speaking or other reform activity. This speech is an early but sophisticated response to such arguments” (Campbell 71). At this point in history, white women suffragists saw themselves in domestic “slavery,” hence their involvement and frequent interest in abolition. Thus, Mott comments on the freedoms that many women desired, while still affirming the “true womanhood” that society so desired.

Mott morphs this equality argument into a powerful rhetorical discourse that begins with the statement, “There is nothing of greater importance to the well-being of society at large-of man as well as woman- than the true and proper position of woman,” commenting that the idea of woman political equality “has been a theme for ridicule, for satire and sarcasm” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19). Thus, she uses this argument not only to advocate women’s voting rights but also to say that the position of women as the caretaker of the family should in fact be public discussion, as society needs this kind of influence. She comments that she has “long wished to see woman occupying a more elevated position than that which custom for ages has allotted to her” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19). Throughout her argument, she states that men and women should be granted equal standing in society. However, unlike her colleagues that used a patriotic, justice-infused argument, Mott states that men and women are the same in the eyes of God and

thus longs to see the equality of men and women, where “women occup[y] a more elevated position than that which custom for ages has allotted to her” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 19). Thus, she honors the sphere while still trying to test its limits, pushing beyond the boundaries it places upon women. She lists biblical women from both the Old and New Testament who were esteemed for their strength and leadership, namely Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah as well as Anna, Priscilla, and Phebe. She indicates that these women were “looked up to and consulted in times of exigency, and their counsel was received” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 21). Thus, Mott argues for equality with these examples of biblical women preaching, calling that these women “should be known” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 22).

Many antisuffragists and people wary of the suffrage agenda were conservative citizens that were deeply religious. The fact that Mott did not disregard religion from her argument allowed her to be seen as rational and respectable to a nineteenth century audience. She is not arguing for a change in human nature. Instead, she argues for equal economic opportunity and voting rights through extending women’s reach and seeing her different outlook on society as a possibility to advance society. She lists a great reformer who was still ‘womanly,’ stating “Did Elizabeth Fry lose any of her feminine qualities...having preformed the duties of a mother to a large family...empowered by Him?” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 26).

Mott is still enforcing the separation of women as different (almost beneath) men, claiming that they will still be ‘womanly,’ or lesser, even with speaking rights. She “asks for no change, we are satisfied with nature,” continuing to allow the social status quo to stay the same while simultaneously changing the political one (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 23). She ends her speech with a somewhat apology, referring to herself as “the speaker,” eliminating her name and presence in her speech. She later states, “It is with reluctance that I make the demand for the political rights of woman, because this claim is so distasteful to the age” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin

30). Mott states that she “did not profess to offer anything like argument...but rather a sentiment” (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 20). These instances of self-deprecation in Mott’s speech do not discredit her argument but instead pose a question to her audience to call upon their own morals on the issue at hand, showing that women can still gain enfranchisement in a conservative society. She states that political suffrage would “ennoble women and dignify man,” indicating that separation would still exist (Beer, Ford, and Joslin 20). This argument, while rhetorically less effective than a natural rights argument, appealed to a completely different audience and thus incorporated a new crowd into the women suffrage movement.

The core of this separate sphere argument relied on the idea that women voting rights would reorganize society; women’s contributions would help protect the family, support children’s lives, and improve society. This argument, while much less prominent in suffrage literature, blends the activism of the suffragists with the hesitation of their opponents. While both the natural rights argument and the separate spheres arguments spoke largely to men, the third argument that suffragists made, a capability argument, spoke directly to women.

In direct contrast to the women’s sphere argument, the capability argument directly opposed the ideals that the former relied on. One statement that completely exemplifies this argument is found in Lucy Stone’s “Disappointment is the Lot of Women:”

I have seen a woman at manual labor turning out chair-legs in a cabinetshop, with a dress short enough not to drag in the shavings. I wish other women would imitate her in this. It made her hands harder and broader, it is true, but I think a hand with a dollar and a quarter a day in it, better than one with a crossed ninepence....The widening of woman’s sphere is to improve her lot. Let us do it, and if the world scoff, let it scoff—if it sneer, let it sneer. (Schneir 108)

This statement creates a direct opposition to the sphere argument that was present, with subtle nuances between a women's sphere argument into a capability argument, whose foundation stated that women were intelligent enough to vote based upon their own intellect instead of laws or cultural norms present in society at the time. This shift from a comfortable conversation that came with the 'friendly' women's sphere argument into hard rhetoric that expressed to women that they were worthy and capable acknowledged the potential that women fostered.

Ever since the Middle Ages, women were not just a "status of a 'distraction,' but [a] being who constantly risked sinning almost by her very existence" (Blamires 4). Women for centuries had been seen as inferior to men: "speaking in public, she would compound her threat to men's souls" (Blamires 4). Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, one of the most influential works of Western literature, states, "woman is by nature of lower capacity and quality than man" (Blamires 92). Thus, since the beginnings of medieval times, culture insisted that women's "reason and intelligence were paltry" compared to men (Blamires 5). This cultural attitude continued for six hundred years, going back to ideas that women "have weak and unstable natures and thus they are incomplete in wisdom" (Blamires 253). Consequently, women themselves began to acknowledge a lack of wisdom and resulting stupidity that they harbored, slowing resulting in complacency with the restriction of voting rights. However, many suffragists were not content with these restrictions that had been placed and carried on for hundreds of years. Suffragists that utilized a capability argument completely demolished the idea of a domestic realm that housed women and instead shattered cultural norms that women were inferior.

Many woman suffragists commented on the fact that men, for centuries, have overlooked women's capability and emotional and mental capacity, especially in relation to political abilities. This argument attempted to debunk the separate sphere argument as it tried to explode

the notion that the “cult of womanhood” and thus women’s natural ‘lesser’ qualities were inherent. Suffragists that used the capability argument found the sphere restricted and stifled women. Just as with a natural rights argument and with a separate women’s sphere argument, the capability argument spanned across the movement but gathered its strength during the years directly before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment as pressure was building. In looking at specific examples, one can see how this argument resonated with an audience, aiming to leave the audience feeling empowered and aware of their capacity.

The capability argument held the idea that women deserved the vote: all women were subjects, under the oppressive rule of bosses, husbands, and other men that subjugated or exploited women. A popular poem that emerged in the nineteenth century by Alfred Lord Tennyson stated, “Man to command and woman to obey” (Tennyson 91). Frances Willard coined the phrase ‘Home Protection’ to encourage women to expand their protect against prostitution and venereal disease, thus perpetuating the idea that women have the power to better their own lives. The capability argument emerged later in the movement, with a new band of leaders that included Harriot Stanton Blatch, Jane Addams, and Alice Paul who argued for suffrage not as a matter of natural rights but instead as a solution to social problems that women could protect against such as labor exploitation and corruption, thus linking radical agendas of the beginning of the women’s suffrage movement to later social changes that culminated into a 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Maria W. Stewart composed a discourse that encompassed the foundation of the capability argument, which expressed an ideal that women have not yet had the opportunity to foster their potential in her address “Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall” in 1832 (Logan 6-10). She states, “Methinks were the American free people of color to turn their attention to...intellectual improvement, this would be the result: prejudice would gradually diminish”

(Logan 7). She argues that women “bury their talents in performing mean, servile labor,” in a “life of servitude;” her description of black servitude encompasses the restraints placed upon all women, as there is “no possibility of [the] rising above the condition of servant” (Logan 7). In her speech, she is primarily talking about the subjugation of African-Americans, yet the rhetoric used in her speech, especially seen when she speaks about education, relates to women, not men. In a speech that was way ahead of its time, over fifteen years before the first publicized and widely recognized event of the Seneca Falls Convention, Stewart exposes the absurdity of “asserting that [women] were lazy and idle” (Logan 7). African American women, much more than Caucasian women, had to make the capability argument. Her argument, claiming that women have little to “excite or stimulate” them, completely manifests the ideal that would appear over seventy years later to fight for women suffrage (Logan 8). Her poignant statement appearing in the middle of her address that states, “Had we had the opportunity that you have had to improve our moral and mental faculties, what would have hindered our intellects from being as bright, and our manners from being as dignified as yours?” (Logan 8-9). She exposes the truth that women are forced to “bury their talents,” and thus must succumb to the kitchen and home life. Thus, she plants the seed that women, if allowed, could have the same intellectual ability and consequential “smart, active, and energetic souls filled with ambitious fire,” that men have, an idea that is used throughout capability arguments (Logan 9). Her statements indicating that women had not yet had the opportunity to foster their potential showcases the fact that revivalism was spreading across the country during the antebellum era, giving rise to social reform. This was a time in the North of the Second Great Awakening, thus perpetuating the idea that human behavior was not depraved and could be used as an instrument of reform and societal improvement.

Women protecting themselves also went hand in hand with the claim that women had not yet had the opportunity to showcase their potential in the political world. They claimed that, of course, women seemed lesser, senseless, and unintelligent; men had not given women the opportunity to read, speak publically, or grow intellectually. Of course women do not seem smart and interesting, the suffragists claimed, because they have not had the chance, which is why women deserve the vote. Not only did women have the right, but in addition to that, they also had the ability to vote. Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, delivered at the Women's Convention in Ohio in 1851 perfectly epitomizes the capability argument, especially because she simultaneously makes an abolition and women's suffrage argument, embodying the fact that women are capable of things men never thought they could be (Campbell 100-101). Her short to-the-point speech revolves around the fact that women are capable of activities that have previously been thought to be out of their 'realm,' even bypassing men's capability. She states, "Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?" (Campbell 100). Here, Truth is making an argument both for women and especially for black women. Consequently, she had to argue that she *was* even a woman, as African Americans were extremely oppressed during this time, and then, after she established this fact, she argued that women could be just as strong as men. Thus, the very fact that Truth is making this argument is in and of itself a capability strategy. She then states that women's "intellectual" capability is just as great as men's and they just deny her this right: "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them" (Campbell 100). Her strong, imposing presence coupled with her ideals of intellectual and physical equality debunked

arguments that she was inferior to men. Not only this, but Truth commented on the fact that African American women were capable of activities that had previously been thought to be outside of their 'realm,' a testament to the abolitionist movement that was on the rise.

This argument of capability continues well into the twentieth century, with Mary Church Terrell speaking at the NAWSA convention in 1900, stating:

The elective franchise is withheld from one half of its citizens, many of whom are intelligent, cultured, and virtuous, while it is unstintingly bestowed upon the other, some of whom are illiterate, debauched and vicious, because the word people, by an unparalleled exhibition of lexicographical acrobatics, has been turned and twisted to mean all who were shrewd and wise enough to have themselves born boys instead of girls, or who took the trouble to be born white instead of black. (Spruill 154)

With this rhetoric, Terrell comments on the fact that women, "one half of its citizens," who are "intelligent and cultured" have an extremely vast mental capacity and often are crushed by men who are intellectually lesser than they are just because of their sex.

While other arguments mainly addressed men in their addresses, Lucy Stone, with her capability arguments, talked exclusively to women, evoking an ideal of female empowerment that had not surfaced yet. Stone states that women need the ballot for self-protection in order to be able to support and protect themselves, exposing the idea that women are capable of critical thinking on their own. This mentality of the capability argument is based upon the concerns surrounding a woman in the event of a divorce or marriage. Furthermore, "women were vulnerable to the effects of alcohol abuse...women married to drunkards were at the mercy of their husbands," and thus Stone incorporates an idea that women needed protection (Campbell

5). Suffragists that used this argument argued that if a woman is left alone, she needed to be able to legally support herself. Furthermore, as late as 1900, “in thirty-seven states a woman had no rights to her children, and all her possessions and earnings belonged to her husband” (Campbell 5).

In her 1855 marriage vows, Stone, along with her husband Henry Blackwell, signed a “Marriage Protest,” stating that they would not voluntarily deprive women of basic rights when signing their marriage vows (Schneir 104-105). Stone begins her vows by elevating women and having them at the same standard as men when she states, “our” and “we.” Paralleling the Declaration of Sentiments, Stone lists seven grievances she has with the marriage laws at the time, protesting against laws that give husband the following: custody of the wife’s person, exclusive control of the children, ownership of her personal estate, product of her industry, power as a widow, and against the whole system. She ends her vows by stating, “Marriage should be an equal and permanent partnership,” thus arguing that women are capable of all of these actions (Schneir 105). This protection was vital, with Stone presenting arguments that much of society had not even recognized before as important. If women could have equal marriage rights, Stone argues, then this might be the first step to social, economic, and societal equality. Just as with separate spheres arguments, capability arguments more evoked emotion rather than utilized logic. While they were practical and extremely logical, capability arguments spoke to women and thus needed to expose the need of suffrage rather than the logic of it. They often used personal anecdotes that connected speaker with audience. Stone does this by publicizing a very private document: her marriage vows. This fosters a bond with women who feel dejected and empowers them to harness their aptitude. Her marriage vows were also a comment on the temperance movement, which strived for protection. The movement, led

primarily by women, charged that drinking ruined family life and lead to spousal and child abuse, thus suffrage was necessary for the protection of family life.

Stone continues this female empowerment in relation to the vote in her 1855 discourse, “Disappointment is the Lot of Women ” (Schneir 106-109). In the first paragraph of her address, Stone comments, “I wish that women, instead of being walking showcases, instead of begging of their fathers and brothers the latest and gayest new bonnet, would ask of them their rights” (Schneir 106-107). With this, Stone uses a strategy where she uses personal anecdotes and metaphors to entice her audience to see that this is an argument for women; she states “the question of woman’s rights in a practical one” (Schneir 107). Her passionate rhetoric encompasses women in “Brazil,” “the young State of Ohio,” “Mohammedan countries,” and in her own town. Stone parallels Catt’s use of the discrediting of American supremacy by also exposing the hypocrisies of American exceptionalism. These far-reaching instances from other countries of women depravation and oppression showcase the fact that women are continually and always stripped of their voice. On multiple occasions, Stone will end a paragraph with a poignant sentence that questioned the social norms of the time: “And do not tell us before we are born even, that our province is to cook dinners, darn stockings, and sew on buttons” (Schneir 108). Stone even almost comes before her time when she later states, “We are told woman has all the rights she wants,” an antisuffragist sentiment that Stone comments on with no abashment (Schneir 108). Her metaphors and anecdotes are one of the first suffrage discourses that prove to men that the idea of female enfranchisement is a legitimate one: “Women working in tailor shops are paid one third as much as men” (Schneir 107). She ends her speech with the statement, “the widening of woman’s sphere is to improve her lot” (Schneir 109). This one statement houses so many arguments: it would improve women politically, it would preserve her and allow her protection, and it would better society. Thus, Stone comments on what the vote would do for

women and what women would do for the vote; she wisely marries the betterment of society with women in her discourse. Her use of personal anecdotes, generalizations, and reactions stems from the fact that throughout her rhetoric, Stone speaks to women and encourages them to see the potential they carry. Not only this, but the 1850s was the height of the separate spheres doctrine as well as when the nation was on a steady path towards crisis. Thus, the idea of liberation was a hot-button issue in America, especially as many women suffragists were also abolitionists. This paired with the fact that the era of education reform was also on the rise segued straight into a capability argument.

Stone's strategies of including adding her own commentary to narrative events, making connections that parallel women who live in the past to women who live in the present, inviting her audience to identify with the characters in the narratives by relating the events in the character's lives to their own, and making women's experiences seem valuable so they realize the importance and power in them fighting for suffrage rights themselves create a passionate discourse that fosters women to harness their potential and finally make the move to intersect history instead of paralleling it, as women have the ability to simply be involved in it.

Like Stone, Stanton herself uses a capability argument in her "Solitude of Self" speech in 1892 (Keetley and Pettegrew 7-11). She comments:

Women are already the equals of men in the whole realm of thought, in art, science, literature, and government . . . The poetry and novels of the century are theirs, and they have touched the keynote of reform in religion, politics, and social life. They fill the editor's and professor's chair and plead at the bar of justice, walk the wards of the hospital, and speak from the pulpit and the platform. (Keetley and Pettegrew 10-11)

Here, Stanton indicates that women are equal to men in mental capacity, showing to her audience that women have already achieved this feat mentally and now just require it politically. She states that “nature [has] endowed them equally,” paralleling women to men in immeasurable quantities (Keetley and Pettegrew 7). The humanist ideology that Stanton uses throughout her speech is a cry to women that their lives matter and they have a right to change how they stand in society.

By the 1880s, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had launched into a new chapter of her political work: a public critique of the church and society, railing “against the injustices of the Christian religion” (Kern 92). Since her involvement in the women suffrage movement, beginning rhetorically in 1848, Stanton had fostered an interest in a new alternative to organized religion, where she challenged the biblical ideal that women were subservient to men. From the 1830s through the 1880s, biblical texts were frequently invoked either to justify or to deny women’s right to a public presence. Stanton herself, by the early 1880s, “saw the church and the Bible uncompromisingly, as looming obstacles to woman’s liberty that needed to be leveled” (Kern 96). Her later works, including her “Solitude of Self” speech as well as “The Woman’s Bible,” published in two parts in 1895 and 1898, showcased this skepticism. Stanton’s integration into a more philosophical rhetoric can be seen in her 1892 “Solitude of Self” speech, becoming much more interested in the “subjective roots of women’s inequality” (Kern 96).

In the first paragraph, she uses diction such as “Protestant idea,” “individual conscience,” and “her rights...are to use all her faculties for her own safety and happiness,” all expressing that women are the “arbiter of her own destiny” (Keetley and Pettegrew 7). One third of the words used in her first paragraph (thirty two of ninety three) address empowering ideals that correspond with basic rights that women have the capacity to achieve. She does this even more obviously when she states “if we consider her as a citizen,” indicating that women

themselves can change their perception. It would be inhuman and cruel, Stanton states, to deny women enfranchisement. With this, she interweaves a natural rights argument into a capability argument to showcase that women have the ability to gain these rights, creating a “humanistic ideology” (Campbell 371). She also organizes her speech where women are first described as person, citizen, woman, and only then as a mother and wife. Here, Stanton uses a rhetorical strategy where she shows the victories of suffrage thus far, showcasing that society views women as entities that allow for potential and do not just exude submission. Thus, Stanton exposes the standing that women already have, now at the turn of the century, and she essentially proves to society that the granting of women’s rights is inevitable. This organization mirrors her shift to individualism, going from the broad “person” to the individual “wife.” In this, she magnifies the significance that the suffrage vote could still have.

This argument continued well into the twentieth century. In 1911, H.G. Cattell prepared an argument for women suffrage that stated, “Women are equal to men intellectually. In fact, if we take the number of graduates from our schools and colleges, we must admit that they are farther advanced mentally... Women are better morally, as evidenced by the criminals in the penitentiaries” (Cattrell 15). Here, Cattell argues that “normal” women who lead average lives are better than the rough and tumble men who throw their lives away, an idea that had previously been debunked with the idea that even ‘bad’ men were superior to all women. The capability argument fostered women’s potential and showed women themselves, through personal narratives and realistic expectations, that they had the ability to vote; with this pioneer strategy used by suffragists, twenty-nine states were able to win significant voting rights prior to passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

The presence of three different types of arguments, natural rights, separate spheres, and capability, allowed women suffragists to project a rhetoric that advocated bettering women’s

lives by allowing them enfranchisement. The immersion of women into both the rhetorical and public sphere has changed the course of history, which planted seeds that women today still feel the effects of. The actions of the suffragists permitted the passage of women suffrage, championing a victory through educating the public enough to realize the validity of women's suffrage through their rhetoric. In 1920, due to the efforts of the suffragists, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified; this victory is "considered the most significant achievement of women in the Progressive Era" (Women in the Progressive Era). However, just as suffrage literature fought to protect women, antisuffrage literature advocating the same goals emerged with a different angle: it sought to protect women *without* change.

Chapter Two: Antisuffrage Rhetoric and History

Throughout American history, there has been a constant push against women in both the private and public world, with questions of women's place in society deeply imbedded within American history. Before the United States was even founded, issues of sexism and female involvement in the public world had already emerged within society. Abigail Adams famously wrote to her husband John Adams to "remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." However, Abigail's request was ignored in 1776 and in the following decade when the founding fathers framed the Constitution. Thus, the entire foundation of the United States overlooks and dismisses an entire half of its population. This parallels philosophical ideas that share the same views; almost 100 years previously in 1689, John Locke articulated similar views of the unimportance of women. In his *Two Treatise*, Locke states that role of women is to bear men's children and the price of bearing children is loss of autonomy with respect to acquisition, ownership and control of property (Locke 11). From the foundations of government and ideals, life has been viewed as a patriarchy, with women never standing a chance. This limited view of women's roles can be labeled antiwoman, which planted the seed for antisuffragism, which emerged as its successor: "Perhaps not every suffragist is a Feminist, but every Feminist is a Suffragist, and there is now an inseparable association of certain fundamental ideas involved in the makeup of these [two]" (*Manual for Speakers* 12).

The rhetoric opposing the rise of the idea of suffragism in the United States was part of a countermovement that was not just sporadic, separate pieces of rhetoric but instead a concerted effort to completely distinguish a rising change. While the revolutionary suffrage ideology reflected a tone of American progressive reform during the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, antisuffragist literature during this period exposed the conservative

impulses that predominated American society. The motives and rationales behind antisuffragist arguments demonstrated with unabashed logic the American mentality concerning women and men, the prejudices and conservative rationale of the period. The antisuffragists revealed the anxiety of the middle and upper class that was so prevalent at the time, perpetuating rhetoric that expressed the fear that plagued the nation. Buried in the heap of discarded history and overlooked discourse, the antisuffragists showcase an insight into a complicated transitional period of American history.

Furthermore, women began to have a more active role, beginning with the temperance movement that progressed into the suffrage movement that enabled them to participate in a world outside the home, as the “two movements intersected in the mid-nineteenth century, infuenc[ing] each other” (Paulson 189). With this, levels of opposition to women’s activism also grew with fervor. Radical critics of female rights, suffrage, and liberty proved virulent and aggressive in their rhetoric. As nineteenth-century American women began to challenge public and private restrictions placed upon them, a backlash manifested into an ‘antisuffrage movement’ that swept the nation.

The antisuffrage movement, while often overlooked in history, is defined by rhetoric that prospers and influences a nation. Just as with suffragists, antisuffragists used three common arguments in their rhetoric. The first argument that was used by antisuffragists was the preservation of family life, an ideal rooted in fear of the radical changes that suffrage would bring. Women were the foundation of the household, and all would be turned to devastation if she were permitted the right to vote. A second argument was that women are inherently physically and mentally fragile, and do not have the intellectual capability of voting or making such large decisions. Thus, women needed to be protected. Rhetors that utilized this argument chastised suffragists and “warned society that women’s inherent weakness, manifested in Eve’s

original transgression, would reemerge in corrupt and unstable female voters” (Marshall 19). A final primary argument of the antisuffrage movement was a separate spheres argument that encompassed biological argument that stated that women are inherently different from men. This natural subordination of women argument prized the cult of true womanhood and sought to upgrade and enhance women’s domestic function into something that was not only desired but also honored. This ideology also used a patriotic ideal that the suffragists used: “turning submission into a noble virtue and self-sacrifice into a patriotic duty, the canon of domesticity defined a sphere where woman would demonstrate her moral superiority and power over men” (Marshall 19). These three arguments, while buried in a heap of discarded history and discounted discourse, showcase an insight into a complicated transitional period of American history.

The turn of the century saw the rise of antisuffrage organizations, including the National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage, founded in 1911, which had twenty-five states’ involvement. The first decade of the twentieth century saw an emergence of detestation to this “feminist disease” (Marshall 3). Not only were associations such as the New England Anti-Suffrage League and the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women growing, but periodicals such as the *Anti-Suffragist* (1908) and *Woman’s Protest* (1912) were also on the rise. Antisuffragists “authored pamphlets, published journals, raised money to sustain as many as twenty-eight state associations, and toured the campaign states un-chaperoned” (Marshall 5). Therefore, this antisuffrage era of history is not a few utterances of disdain but instead a concerted effort that delayed the vote for decades, with the first forty years of suffrage yielding only four suffrage victories: Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho.

Female suffrage opponents feared that political involvement would undermine women’s integral role as keepers of domestic life, fearing that the balance of power within the home would

crumble. They “fought suffrage as a threat to their own positions of privilege,” finding the vote a threat to their way of life (Marshall 5). Big businesses worried that female voters would overturn their accustomed way of doing things by legislating against child labor, inequality in the workplace, or alcohol (Kleinberg 198). In the South, many white men defined masculinity as male authority over women, so that “the world of male politics dominated the female world of the home” (Kleinberg 199). However, it wasn’t just men that opposed women’s right to vote; women did as well. Many workingwomen believed enfranchisement might restrain protective legislation. A ‘girl’ reporter, Winifred Black, using the pseudonym Annie Laurie, toured Denver, Colorado, on election day in 1896 and reported it was full of a steady stream of “disreputable men and pitiful revolting women with dyed hair who walked with a swagger.” Her rhetoric focused on derogatory phrases such as “disreputable,” “revolting,” and “sickening” (Mead 69). She focused on corruption and indifference among women voters at all social levels, thus arguing that women were incapable of the responsibility of voting, which was a direct opposition to the capability argument of suffragists, emphasizing the ironic testimony to the fact that both discourses aimed to “help women.” By focusing on corruption, Black stated that women were “acting just like men, and it just doubles the ballot, and what is the use?” (Mead 69). In general, antisuffragists manipulated fears that partisan politics would corrupt women even as they represented the interests that exploited them (Mead 69). The emergence of a so-called antisuffrage movement arose strictly to oppose the suffrage referenda, which promoted liberal ideas that the conservative nation was fearful of. The conservative nation perceived the suffrage movement as a potential threat to the “Democratic Party’s supremacy,” as it would undermine the foundations of the United States (Green 36). Specifically, antisuffragists were concerned with the dangers that were inevitable, as “this Commonwealth has gotten along so well” without suffrage (Green 36).

The opposition to women's suffrage, beginning rhetorically in the late nineteenth century, slowly grew to be an organized, resilient, and vigorous movement. Both men and women opposed suffrage for many different reasons, most rooted in fear. These fears included the fear of change instead of clinging to Victorian ideals, the fear of breaking the heteronormative family unit and security, fear of losing feminine ideals such as charity, education, civility, and philanthropy if women became involved in politics, fear of untying the fragility of women's delicate nature, etc. Alarm was perpetuated with statements such as, "A vote for the amendment means increased taxation because of increased election expenses...an admission of the incapacity of man to govern," with the fear of male diminution set in their minds (*Case Against Woman Suffrage* 60).

Organized opposition to women's suffrage "did not immediately follow the 1848 Seneca Falls convention inaugurating what was then called the 'woman rights' movement" (Marshall 18). Women's antisuffrage mobilization officially "began in 1871, when nineteen women published a petition to the US Congress remonstrating against votes for women in the editorial pages of the popular *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*" (Marshall 19-20). What began as a brief exposition to the vices of suffrage soon grew into a countermovement that prized with passion and fervor woman's subordination that was decreed by God.

The image of a 'new woman' that was rapidly approaching infested minds and perpetuated change at the time, with the demise of society racking their brains. Many feared the negative effects of female suffrage, such as "encouraging radical and unpatriotic female behavior" (Mead 143). The new woman was "an independent, college-educated, American girl devoted to suffrage" (Patterson 2). Many people, such as Emma Wolf in 1896 thought that there was "nothing new or abnormal in such a woman...I hate that phrase 'New Woman'" (Patterson 1). This opposition flourished not only in areas where political life was prominent such as New

York, but also in areas of the country where states had only recently gained ratification of their statehood such as Nebraska and Idaho. The antisuffrage movement spread like wildfire. The failure of almost every state to ratify the vote for women between 1896 and 1910 “was partially due to the effectiveness of the antis” (Scott 140). Just as the Nebraska Woman Suffrage group launched their initiative to place the issue on the ballot in 1914, the Nebraska Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was founded in Omaha, with opposition to suffrage coming immediately. Many, if not all, states had similar opposition groups emerge all throughout the country: Oklahoma Anti-Suffrage Association in 1918, Texas Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1916, Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women in 1897, etc. The *Times* announced the formation of a Men’s League Opposed to Extension of Suffrage to Women. However, the chief organization in this battle was the NAOWS, or the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, which inspired much individual state opposition.

The NAOWS was founded in 1911 and led by Josephine Dodge. Believing that woman suffrage would ultimately decrease woman’s rights by eliminating her work in communities and her ability to effect societal reforms, the NAOWS published *Woman’s Protest* (reorganized as *Woman Patriot* in 1918). With headquarters located first in New York and later at Washington, DC, the organization continued to publicize its newsletter throughout the 1920s even after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

However, before many of these state associations formed, there were many political acts that attempted to eliminate the enfranchisement of women. Throughout the 1870s to the 1910s, women who attempted to gain the right to vote were consistently shut down. The Anti-Suffrage Society was founded in 1871, composed primarily of wives of prominent men in society. These societies associated feminism and suffrage with stricken with mental illness and “hysteria,” an ideal that followed antisuffrage literature throughout its history. The Man Suffrage Association

opposed to Political Suffrage for Women was organized in 1913 for the purpose of drawing attention to the fact that giving political suffrage to women “would draw the attention and interest of women from home duties which they alone can discharge, would bring selfish and artful women into prominence, entice them by holding political prizes, and would encourage freak legislation” (*The Case Against Woman Suffrage, A Manual*).

The clubs that were founded for antisuffragism were restricted to women of upper class society that did not feel the effects from the lack of enfranchisement. This was not purposeful, but the discourse of this time revolved around and pertained to women of power, as they had the available means to be involved in this fight. Women antisuffragists “recruited, organized, and raised funds by holding teas, luncheons, and balls at prominent hotels”

(http://nebraskastudies.unl.edu/0700/frameset_reset.html?http://nebraskastudies.unl.edu/0700/stories/0701_0112.html). Thus, the women that were part of this backlash against the rise of feminism were educated, upper class, wealthy, connected, privileged, and overall content women, all of which, besides being “content,” paralleled the organization and leadership of the suffrage movement. Although throughout history many antisuffragists were women, the movement was supported by politically and economically important men. *The Case Against Woman Suffrage* provides a list of “prominent men and women opposed to woman suffrage and opinions,” citing an author, late Secretary of State, former Assistant Attorney General of the United States, President of Radcliffe College (for Women), late Justice of the United States, late President Grover Cleveland, and many more (*Case Against Woman Suffrage* 13). J.B. Sanford, Chairman of Democratic Caucus, prepared in 1911 an *Argument Against Women’s Suffrage*, in which he reiterated the fact that a “mother’s influence is needed in the home.”

While antisuffrage rhetoric paralleled suffrage rhetoric, it in many ways differed greatly from suffragist rhetoric due to its contradicting aims. Both agreed on the definition of a woman’s

sphere, that a difference between men and women existed; yet whereas suffragists used this norm to argue for change, the antisuffragists were determined to keep the ideal that a woman's rightful place was outside of the political sphere and continue it in the home. While antisuffrage rhetoric intensified dramatically in the 1890s when the possibility of women suffrage was on the horizon, there is a long history of using words such as "absurd, disagreeable, ridiculous, and revolting to attack the general notion of women's rights and equality" (Kinnard 1). Thus, the antisuffragists had to reemphasize the importance of a woman and essentially diminish the emerging rhetoric that suffragists put forth.

The antisuffrage rhetoric had to not only rely on very specific, already conceived conceptions of women and men's relationships but also claim that woman suffrage would violate the cherished norms of society and sever the crucial ties between men and women. By using this rhetoric, antisuffragists delayed enfranchisement for dozens of years as well as a change in the American attitude towards women for generations. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent Victorian ideals of the cult of domesticity in the United States provided an emergence of a large wealthy, conservative middle class. Consequently, the middle class woman was designed to be a perfect mother and wife to the serene family of the nineteenth century. Antisuffragists argued that if women left the house and became part of the political world, they would inevitably destroy motherhood and create chaos in this time of peace and societal growth. Close to the heart of all antisuffragists orators "was a sentimental vision of Home and Mother" (Kraditor 15). The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage distributed a flyer entitled "Household Hints," that read, "Housewives! You do not need a ballot to clean your sink spout...good cooking lessens alcoholic craving quicker than a vote," a last desperate plea for society to continue with the established roles in society, as it contended that women were only good for one thing: homelife (Barkhorn).

Coupled with this vision of the serene and ideal family life was the notion of the man as a knight in shining armor whose entire existence revolved around preserving the delicateness of a damsel in distress. Thus, women had to be protected against the wretchedness of politics. However, the most prominent yet subtle argument for antisuffragist rhetoric was a sexist, biological one, arguing that men and women were simply different, separated in sex and thus needing to be separated in politics, reiterating separate spheres. In pinpointing differences between the sexes, the rhetoric, both complimentary and condescending, was rational and fundamentally rooted in 'truth' and 'science.'

One of the principle antisuffragists that created an all-encompassing piece of rhetoric was Josephine Anderson Pearson. Not only did her document include the common arguments of antisuffragists including a preservation of family life, women are inherently physically and mentally fragile, and a third stating that men are biologically different than women, but it also incorporated almost every single rhetorical argument used by antisuffragists in history. Pearson was born and raised in Monteagle, Tennessee in 1868. Her mother, Amanda Caroline Roscoe Pearson, opposed woman suffrage because of its abolitionist origins; shortly before her death in 1915, she made her daughter promise that she would fight the woman suffrage amendment should it ever come to Tennessee. Person and the "antis," her anti suffragist colleagues, fought long and hard to keep the vote for women away from the Tennessee legislature before her death in 1944. A well-educated woman, she earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1880 at Gallatin Female College, Irving College in McMinnville, Tennessee, her Masters of Arts in 1886 at Cumberland College in Lebanon, Tennessee, and studied both at Vanderbilt and the University of Missouri (Spruill 214). From 1917 to 1920, she served as the president of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage and president of the Southern Women's League for Rejection of the Susan. B. Anthony Amendment.

A leader of the antisuffrage movement, especially in the South, Pearson authored a collection of papers, titled the *Josephine A. Pearson Papers* (ca. 1860-1943) located at the Tennessee State Department of Tennessee State Library and Archives. Broadside attacks on women's enfranchisement can be seen in her opposition "Why We Oppose Votes for Women," a document that is paralleled to many of its sister documents of the same nature seen throughout the entire country (Pearson). There were lists and documents such as the aforementioned opposition that bombarded the country, showing that the antisuffrage movement was a concerted one that spanned time and place; for example, New York's "Some Reasons Why We Oppose Votes for Women" in 1894 directly parallels Pearson's list.

Pearson's document is a list of eight reasons why women should be denied the right to vote. Each justification begins with "BECAUSE" in all capital letters with subsequent lines of the specific grievance indented. The first argument Pearson gives is a protection argument. While implying that women are dumb and weak, this argument calls that a separation of the sexes would overall protect women. Pearson follows this with a nonchalant "why bother" argument, stating that "[men and women's] interests, generally speaking, being the same." This ties with her fifth point, stating, "There is no reason to believe [the ballot] would be more effectual in the hands of women." Thus, there is unquestionably no reason as to why women should obtain the right of suffrage, as there would be no difference in government legislature. When Pearson states, "Because women are not suffering from any injustice which giving them the ballot would rectify," she utilizes a classist argument implying that there is nothing currently wrong with the way women are perceived and placed in society. The classist argument follows in the subsequent argument, which states, "Political equality will eventually deprive women of many special privileges hitherto according to her by man-made law." According to this, women already have privileges and these would be literally stripped of her if given the right to vote. This

piece of rhetoric parallels the fact that the majority of women who were fighting for antisuffrage and denying women these new, revolutionary rights were already middle- to upper-class women; thus, they did not realize that the right to vote would improve her life in many different ways. Her sixth argument is the most intellectual and makes the most sense, especially for a modern day audience: “equality in character does not imply similarity in function.” This creates a naturalization argument that implies the foundation that women and men are simply different, and no amount of granting rights will change this. She states that “women stand outside of politics,” and the only topics women can converse about are matters of “education, charity, and reform,” and thus must stay out of the realm of State government.

“Why We Oppose Votes for Women” is a document that encompassed numerous if not all arguments that antisuffrage activists’ took. The proliferation of antisuffrage rhetoric that emerges can be categorized to three of Pearson’s primary arguments that are the most primary, a preservation of family life argument, an argument that felt as if women were too physically and emotionally fragile to vote, and a separate spheres one stating that men and women were inherently different.

The first primary argument utilized by antisuffragist rhetors desperately wanted to preserve the family life. This type of discourse claimed that women either have already achieved the equality they need, or that they do not need any more equality as their lives are content at their present rank in society, which *must* be in the home. Family life would be destroyed, and chaos would follow if women were allowed enfranchisement rights.

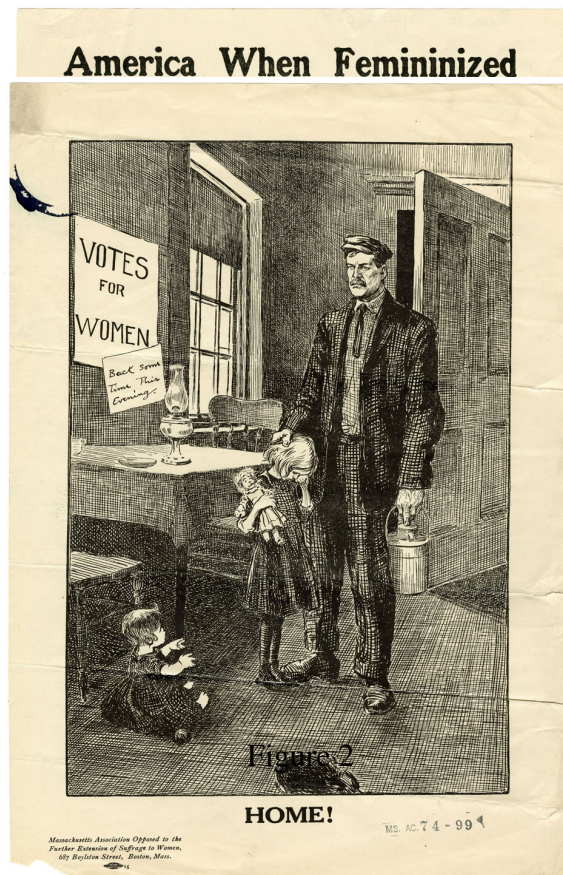
The second argument revolved around the fact that men often felt as if women’s delicateness and ignorance needed to be protected and thus this made women more attractive to men. This protection argument revolved around the ideal that women’s physical condition could not withstand the trials and turbulence of political life as they were fragile in every sense of the

word. This natural mentality relied on ideals that women were physically and mentally incapable of undertaking on the risks and duties that came with voting. Thus, femininity is associated with emotionalism and illogicality, traits that are inconsistent with the proper exercise of the ballot. The physical action of women being at polling stations was unfathomable if not unethical. Not only would women have to physically be at polling places that were too dirty for their liking, but they would also be plagued by political issues for the rest of their lives. The excessive emotional nature of her nervous system causes her to have “irregular, illogical, and incongruous action, and no one can foretell when the explosion will come” (Kraditor 21).

The separate sphere argument is “designed to appeal to people who needed a scientific sanction for their beliefs” (Kraditor 18). Both men and women used biological arguments to assimilate women to the idea that their subordination to men is natural. Bishop Seymour told a *Times* reporter, “God created man and woman somewhat differently-the difference cannot be obliterated” (*Pamphlets Printed* 17). Their rhetoric would elevate women’s intelligence only when it revolved around home and family life, useless in the political realm.

The first argument, one that stated that the emergence of women into the political world would lead to family destruction, was prevalent in political cartoons, which was one of the ways in which rhetoric was used during this era to convey distrust, astonishment, and disagreement with the emerging feminist and suffrage literature. Antisuffragists that employed the preservation of family life argument particularly used political cartoons often, as they could illustrate the dangers and wreckage that suffrage would cause society in a very visual sense. “Home!” a political cartoon also by Pearson, was printed by permission of Women’s Anti-Suffrage Association of Massachusetts to support her argument that the integration of women to the voting would ultimately cause the destruction of the family (See Figure 1). The cartoon depicts a man, tired from a long day at work, evidenced by his work attire, lunchpail in hand, and weary

expression, who arrives home to find his two young daughters abandoned by their mother while she fights for women's suffrage. The two girls are crying, tired, and alone, with a note above them from the mother stating, "back some time this evening." Using a destruction of the family life argument, Pearson envisioned a demise of the ideals of family life, motherhood, and children were women given the enfranchisement right. If women are given the right to vote, this cartoon



expresses, they will desert their motherly, womanly duties, ultimately destroying the balance of American life. The man's dejected expression, the eldest daughter's crying face, and the youngest daughter's body language where she anticipates being picked up are all testaments to the lack of a woman presence. The cartoon evokes pure pity for the family and disgust towards the woman at the broken family presented. This argument of separation of the sexes is again exemplified with another of Pearson's political cartoons titled "America When Feminized" (See Figure 2). In this cartoon, a suffrage mother hen

abandons her thirteen eggs to fight for "votes for women," which is written on a sash around her body. Captioned with "Suffragist-Feminist Ideal Family Life," with this political agenda, the male rooster is now left to sit on and care for the eggs, as, with the mother hen gone "these eggs will get all cold." Consequently, the eggs will die. This desolate image parallels the outcome of the United States if women are permitted enfranchisement. The cartoon follows this by stating, "A Vote for Federal Suffrage is a Vote for Organized Female Nagging Forever," essentially

pleading to the public that women have no place in the political sphere. Not only this, but the phrase “nagging forever” calls upon old stereotypes that this is the only type of communication women are capable of performing. If America permits women to vote, and thus becomes a “feminized” nation, society will see a “collapse of the male ascendancy,” “make sissies of American men,” and “doom civilization.” By masculinizing women and feminizing men, society will turn corrupt, as suffrage brings forth a “denature [of] both men and women.” The mother hen already has one leg out the door, even though one egg has hatched and thus is in need of care. This action calls upon ideas that women will be completely separated from the home and family life if given these new rights. Thus, this statement uses a biological argument to enforce a separation of sexes and preservation of family life argument as well. Consequently, a separation of the sexes that restricts women voting rights is natural and maintains peace in both the American household and in American government. One other antisuffrage cartoon that proposed that woman’s progress in the public sphere would lead to the obliteration of the family life was published in *Life Magazine* in August of 1912 by Laura E. Foster (See Figure 3). In this cartoon, a woman is at the top of a staircase while her two children are at the bottom. She is surrounded by steps labeled “Loneliness,” “Anxiety,” “Suffrage,” and “Career,” approaching a stand labeled “Fame.” As she looks back, the two children are holding flowers standing on lower steps labeled “Home,” “Children,” “Marriage,” and “Love.” The higher a woman climbs on the social ladder, the further away from her children and from her womanly duties she becomes. The two children are smiling as they are surrounded by the words “Love,” “Marriage,” “Children,” and “Home,” ideals of the ‘proper’ woman during the turn of the century: ideals that keep women subjugated and at home. The political cartoon comments that suffrage is not an end for many woman feminists, but instead it spirals out of control, leading to a life of unhappiness and a destruction of the family life. The woman is distanced from her innocent, loving children, and the

disconnection between the two is emphasized by the word “suffrage.” The woman is tired, old, and weary, emphasized by her body shape that is concave and dejected. The vegetation at the bottom, paralleling the bottom of society, where happiness and a woman’s place prosper, is lively, green, and luscious. In contrast, the lack of life at the top of the staircase is emphasized by cracks in the pavement and weeds surrounding the word “Fame,” which Foster is conveying to



Figure 3

manifested antisuffrage diction into a political cartoon that showcased a real life situation that terrified the general public.

be the end of the suffrage agenda, not enfranchisement, which the woman passes. The cartoon, titled ‘Looking Backward’ is extremely effective in that Foster highlights the ideal that a woman cannot both advance politically, socially, economically, and obtain rights while still loving and caring for her family, children, and home life, ultimately leading to its destruction. Thus, the children are left behind, neglected. Foster’s political cartoon utilizes the same classic argument that Pearson uses, implying that women not only have already achieved the equality they deserve but, if granted political suffrage rights, would bypass equality entirely become subject to the terrible vices that come with it. Foster

Antisuffragists fought a harder battle rhetorically than suffragists, as they had to completely counteract a movement rather than perpetuate change; antisuffragists had to use multiple arguments spanning rhetorical discourse to reiterate their points. Thus, antisuffragists used a second argument from a completely different mindset to emphasize their points. The second primary argument suffragists stated women were inherently physically and mentally fragile, and thus were literally unable to vote. Antisuffragist advocates truly believed that they were protecting women. *A Manual for Speakers, Debaters, Lecturers, Writers, and Anyone Who Wants the Facts*, which was published in the early twentieth century, stated, “Remember that we are fighting for the true interests of woman” (*The Case against Woman Suffrage* 4). To the antisuffragists, “men were expected to have a variety of ambitions and capabilities, but all women were destined from birth to be full time wives and mothers. To dispute this eternal truth was to challenge theology, biology, and sociology” (Kraditor 15). Thus, since the antisuffragists identified femininity with irrationality, the idea of hysteria is present in much of the rhetoric, completely contradicting the capability argument that suffragists made. Psychologist Hugo Munsterberg wrote that the “women’s movement would cause race suicide by undermining the attractiveness of marriage, feminizing higher culture, and by making women pathologically tense, would render them unfit mothers” (Marshall 89). Munsterberg’s discussion of feminization and nervous disorders alluded to hysteria, a ‘disease’ that many outspoken women were diagnosed with at the turn of the century. Consequently, the prescribed treatment was “rest and quiet, a return to traditional female seclusion” (Marshall 89). To denounce both their proponents and the basic foundation of women suffrage, many antisuffragists “built on traditional beliefs about female physical frailty to diagnose woman suffrage as an illness akin to neurasthenia, a fever caused by the excessive development of the emotional in her nervous system” (Marshall 105). Antisuffragists argued that women were physically weak, emotionally

fragile, and intellectually underdeveloped. They had the argument that “women are more emotional than men, which is a great source of strength in women’s sphere, justified their exclusion from public power” (Marshall 123). They used this argument not only to justify the exclusion of women from the voting world but also to attack her character: “rather than depicting women as more vulnerable because of their sympathetic natures, men portrayed them as petty, jealous, and mean-spirited, lacking in judicial fairness” (Marshall 123).

Many if not all antisuffragists utilized the word ‘hysteria’ in their rhetoric as well as utilized the argument that women were entirely fragile in every sense, including Reverend Father Walsh of Troy, who delivered his address at a mass meeting called forth by the Anti-Women’s Suffrage Association in Albany, New York, in 1894 (*Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women’s Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* 99-102). His entire address can be categorized as believing women are inherently physically and mentally fragile; he uses dozens of different strategies to express this ideal. The entire natural subordination of women argument is noted in his speech.

Walsh’s address begins by stating that suffrage is not a woman’s issue to be decided on; is an issue that “is to be decided by men only” (99). In this first sentence of his address, Walsh establishes a protection argument and thus perpetuates a mentality that women cannot handle decision making issues and therefore must hand them over to men. Walsh moves on to state that women, if allowed the right to vote, would be subjugated to “the danger lurking under an assumed privilege...which threatens the position and character of [women]” (99). In this statement, Walsh not only degrades women by stating that they are too fragile for voting rights but he also elevates men to an even higher status by claiming that they are the ones who will protect these “threatened” women. The “danger lurking” would bring forth unimaginable consequences that would altogether ultimately destroy women’s delicate qualities. Using

adjectives such as “gentle,” “pure,” “sweet,” “innocent,” and “chaste,” Walsh institutes the idea that women are weak and to be protected. Walsh proceeds to state that “no [man] can forget his indebtedness to woman...as a mother, sister, wife, or friend” (99). Here, Walsh establishes woman’s rightful place as an object of the household and no more, indicating that the natural place for a woman simply cannot be in the State and must be in the home.

Walsh parallels Pearson in many cases: his statement “I have yet to learn that a single advocate of female suffrage has contended for the measure for the reason that its concession will improve and safeguard the female character,” directly corresponds with Pearson’s ideal that women gaining the ballot will not enhance their life (100). Walsh calls forth the idea of separation of the sexes when he states, “within her own sphere,” dictating that women already have their place and have no need to expand from this (100). This completely contradicts the separate sphere argument that Lucretia Mott used to women’s advantage. Walsh is adamant that the men of society need to protect their women: “If we clothe our women with the franchise [of suffrage], we increase a thousand fold all the evils and injustice and blindness and selfishness of partisanship [to our women]” (101). A separation of the sexes is natural and vital to society, Walsh states, with women encompassing “the more sacred duties of home, religion, and education” (101). Women are naturally too emotional for state involvement, seen by Walsh’s statement, “the excessive development of the emotional in her nervous system, ingrafts on the female organization, a neurotic or hysterical condition...every woman carries this power of irregular, illogical, and incongruous action; and no one can foretell when the explosion will come” (101). This one sentences establishes the basis of Walsh’s argument that women are too fragile to be granted enfranchisement, and thus marries the arguments of protection and naturalization.

Walsh furthers his argument by stating that the suffrage woman possess “abnormal female ambition,” paralleling his earlier use of “hysteria,” subtly stressing women’s craziness and fallibility (102). Walsh easily marries an informative and authoritative tone with ideals of maintaining woman tenderness and delicateness. While his style almost transcends proper etiquette by coming extremely close to ridiculing and belittling, Walsh does not undermine a woman’s intelligence; he simply continually redirects her talents elsewhere away from state and government involvement. With women manifesting the “noblest elements of character,” which include innocent, chastity, and charity, Walsh strives for a society that integrates a “more womanly” woman (99). While his rhetoric for a modern-day reader is outlandish, displaying a patronizing tone, Walsh exudes promise, compassion, and understanding towards women, calling her “beneficial and uplifting” (100). Walsh adds to the effectiveness of his discourse by tying in personal stories, invoking an intimate relationship with his audience, similar to his suffrage counterparts, specifically Lucretia Mott. Walsh again calls upon the protection argument against women’s suffrage when he sates that “politics are the ruin of vast numbers of our citizens,” demonstrating that women cannot physically be at polling places (100). There is deep corruption in politics, polling places are “pestilential spots seething with perjury, bribery, unclean language, and rowdyism,” and places where people “blush for shame.” The “evils” that voting casts on citizens cannot be transferred to women, as their “gentle” and “emotional” beings cannot handle the torment that comes with enfranchisement. Walsh cries that society must protect their women by denying them the right to vote. Walsh utilizes numerous different arguments to establish his case: protection, classicism, and naturalization.

Even withstanding the fact that audiences were changing, minds were shifting, and society was advancing, Walsh conveys an old-fashioned attitude in a way that appears vital and necessary to society. At the turn of the century, the ideal that women were strong was not as

farfetched as once believed. Thus, Walsh had to combat this. Furthermore, modern-day readers view his discourse as archaic and barbaric, yet his rhetorical discourse trumps a diminishing mentality. He ends his discourse with a definite, concrete ending: “we do, therefore, respectfully protest against any legislation to establish women suffrage, in our land, or in any part of it” (102). With such a precise ending, Walsh does not leave his audience contemplating their next decision or move; he forcefully states his argument, leaving his audience not inspired like his suffrage counterparts but instead set in their ways, unlike his suffrage counterparts who ended speeches contemplating the future. He does not end with emotion, action, or inspiration; his audience is left satisfied and commended for their ideals. When Walsh comments “in our land,” he calls upon the patriotic theme that Anthony and Stanton utilized as well (102). Many antisuffragists during this time turned submission into a noble virtue and “self sacrifice into a patriotic duty” (Marshall 19). Thus, the behavior of woman suffragists, who were independent and challenging, was not only unconventional but it was also immoral, almost a disgrace to society. Furthermore, Walsh offers argument after argument as to how and why women should be subjugated and thus restricted the ballot.

Lyman Abbott also used an “incapable” argument stating that women are too fragile for the vote in his address *Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage* (Abbott). He states that some women “for some reason or another,” desire the right to vote, deducing the hysteria argument that Walsh utilizes, hinting that women who have these outlandish ideals of equality are senseless and irrational (Abbott). He hints that women are hysterical again with his integration of the story of Lady Macbeth, who has, throughout history, been known to be irrational, emotional, and unstable, which is “true to her woman’s nature” (Abbott). This paralleling of all women to one of the most unstable and hysterical characters in literature creates a sense of fear in his audience that creates a hesitancy towards women voting.

Antisuffrage pieces of rhetoric had to completely nullify a rising ideal, and thus their rhetorical discourse incorporated many different ways. Consequently, their common arguments had to directly counteract their predecessors. A third and final primary argument of antisuffragists is their version of a “sphere argument,” arguing that the spheres are biologically natural. Their version of a sphere argument reiterated the mentality that women were simply different than men.

Lyman Abbott, protégé of Henry Ward Beecher, served as editor-in-chief of the weekly publication *Christian Union*. However, soon after he took over the magazine, Abbott changed the journal’s focus from religion to public affairs and literary criticism, renaming it the *Outlook* in 1893 (Marshall 83). With a wide spread of swaying public opinion through mass media, Abbott early on in his life advocated for civil service reform, economic justice for workers, immigration restriction, and the National Security League, co-founded by his son Lawrence. In his early years as a public figure, Abbott was a sympathizer with equal rights for women. However, he was converted to antisuffragism by his wife, eventually publishing more than two dozen antisuffrage editorials and articles in his tenure as the editor-in-chief of the *Outlook*. He put the “magazine on record as opposed to woman suffrage primarily because it is an advocate of woman’s rights” (Marshall 84). He published his address “Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage” in the Houghton-owned *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, with the subheading “A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics.”

By this time, industrialization and the subsequent shift in population from farms to towns and cities brought basic changes in family life that paralleled the change in women’s history. More men “went off each day to work in factory, mill, mine, or office, on railroads or steamships,” and thus women’s integral role in home life was dramatically gaining importance (Rugoff 230). While many women (suffragists) wanted to erode the straightjacket of Puritanism

and Victorian standards of respectability and gentility, many people in society wanted to preserve what peace was left after the Gilded Age, which was ridden with corruption including corrupt state governments, massive fraud in cities controlled by machines, and political payoffs. “The determining context of Gilded Age America was the acceleration of industrialization;” this industrialism paved the way for antisuffrage sentiments (Calhoun 119). The late nineteenth century was a period of not just urbanization but also suburbanization, creating areas that were economically and architecturally homogeneous. Furthermore, “the northeastern section of the country was by far the most heavily urbanized;” this area was the hub of antisuffragism as people in this region saw the development [of] the “reshaping of the walking city” (Calhoun 108). Thus, people had the ability to actually congregate and express their fears. Not only this, but society strove to preserve the peace and sanction that it had lost. Thus, antisuffrage rhetoric surged, as it not only clung to traditional and conservative roles for women that had been in place for centuries but also resisted change and strove for peace. Thus, antisuffrage rhetoric thrived during this time.

Despite this growing antisuffrage mentality, women began to play a larger role in the late nineteenth century labor force, with women working from domestic servants to factory operatives for wages. In 1880, in Massachusetts and Georgia, “women made up 34 percent and 35 percent, respectively, of the labor force” (Calhoun 59). This growing presence of women coupled with the corruption in society lead many antisuffragists to protect women. Many antisuffragists held this ideal at the forefront of their message. Antisuffrage rhetoric appears to be a societal commentary on the change present in cities, as many antisuffragists saw the enfranchisement of women as an attack on American society. Just as society began to question whether or not the rich should be allowed to keep all of the money, the middle class began to grow, causing a change in American family life; antisuffragists strove to preserve the delicate

and coveted private sphere at all costs. In fact, “traditional political ideology...retained vitality in the late nineteenth century;” thus, this era is defined by an ideology that preserved republican institutions, including a women-led private sphere, that had been in place for decades (Calhoun 367).

In his rhetorical career that spanned almost seventy years, Lyman Abbott, serving as both clergyman and journalist, expressed these fears. In September 1903, he published, “Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage” in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Published in Boston, the magazine had a circulation of 38,200 in 1915 (*The Atlantic*). The magazine, which billed itself as a “journal of literature, politics, science, and the arts,” was an immediate success. In his address, Abbott speaks for the “silent women” who ultimately knew that suffrage would be an undesirable resolution. Due to the fact that this article was printed during one of the social, economical, and legal changing times in the country, Abbott had to use many different arguments that cumulated previous arguments that included a preservation of family life argument, an argument that felt as if women were too physically and emotionally fragile to vote, and a separate spheres one stating that men and women were inherently and biologically different, in his speech in order to completely eradicate the suffrage ideal.

Abbott begins his speech by stating, “In 1895 the women of Massachusetts were asked by the state...” commenting on the same time period and affluent area (Northern United States) that Stanton spoke in her own speeches. Thus, while his address is not a direct comment on suffragist speeches such as Stanton’s “Solitude of Self” speech, it is a commentary towards and on the themes she utilized such as change, which is inherent in much of suffrage rhetoric. His speech is an overall reaction to suffrage arguments that had been in existence, as he comments on fears of society. With his speech, one can see the strange and peculiar reactions he has to suffrage

arguments, as both group of rhetors were in a conversation with one another, both part of an overall discussion and discourse on women at this time.

He continues his address by commenting on the sanctity of the home life, using a allegory of an acorn: “Open an acorn: in it we find the oak in all its parts, -- root, trunk, branches. Look into the home: in it we shall find the state, the church, the army, the industrial organization. As the oak is germinant in the acorn, so society is germinant in the family” (Abbott). When making the parallel between an acorn, which produces the basis of life, to the family, Abbott comments on the fact that it is the most important aspect of society. Thus, Abbott insinuates that the sanctity of family life should be preserved at all costs. He goes on to four other allegories, including “Abraham,” “cell,” “blood,” and “tribe,” paralleling them to the natural preservation of the home unit as most valuable when he states, “such is the development of society” (Abbott).

Abbott again goes into a long, repetitive, and descriptive image of a tree, with different aspects representing men and women. Branches and roots are inherently different and thus cannot be comparable. He follows this with the exact same diction but with different comparisons: an eye and an ear, a soldier and a carpenter, Darwin’s *Origin of Species* or Browning’s *Saul*, half an hour or half a yard, gallantry or egotism. Thus, the two entities, men and women, are not inferior or superior but instead simply different. Since “we cannot destroy this difference” in the world, society must keep men and women separate by keeping women out of government and denying them the right to vote (Abbott). Society and family life would crumble, Abbott claims. He then spends a large portion of his speech describing the difference between the sexes, especially in relation to their physical strength. While a woman is as equally loyal, law abiding, patriotic, and brave as a man, it is not her function to protect the State but instead the State’s function to protect her.

Abbott uses a similar strategy that the suffragists used where he creates a familiar bond with his audience. His address often repeats itself, often going in circles. If his audience is women, this is offensive and belittling as it insults their ability to understand a topic fully and easily. However, if his audience is men, instead of seeming condescending, it reads as familiar, friendly, and convicted. Example after example entices the audience. This sense of familiarity draws the reader in further, exemplified with the statement, “This much then seems clear to me and I hope it is clear to the reader also” (Abbott). He creates a bond between the audience, stating, “let *us* not make any mistake,” already persuading the audience to take his point of view (Abbott). These emotional ‘pulls’ are completely interlocked with his logical statements, such as “Women do not wish authority to compel the obedience of their husbands, sons, and brothers to their will,” that the audience overlooks his gross overgeneralization of the entire female population (Abbott). The interplay between his logic (based upon an ideology) and emotion (repetition) exemplify the fact that speeches like his delayed suffrage for decades. The logic enticed the male audience and the emotion enticed the female audience. These emotional pulls parallel the emotional connection that suffragists made to their own audiences. Abbott comments on what “woman feels,” and thus he’s speaking “for” women; this is why, to a modern day audience, this speech is so offensive (Abbott). By stating what women want, he’s speaking for an entire group of people, in fact half of the population, for whom he doesn’t not even belong. How should Abbott know what women want? Yet, he states, “This is the question which in this article I seek to answer,” stating that he is of supreme knowledge over women (Abbott). Consequently, his argument is problematic, as he is not talking to his readers; he’s speaking to other affluent men. He uses the word “he” only eleven times compared to the sixty-three times he uses the word “she,” mostly in relation to things that “she” should and is meant to do.

Later in the speech, Abbott shifts his argument to incorporate larger biological statements, seen when he declares, “Man is not a rough-and-tumble woman. Woman is not a feeble and pliable man,” showcasing Abbott’s own perception of women as first and foremost feeble, weak in both body and mind (Abbott). Abbott follows this by stating, “The first and most patent fact in the family is the difference in the sexes.” This natural “fundamental” distinction is necessary not only for the private family life but also the public State. In one short paragraph, Abbott uses the word ‘nature’ five distinct times to showcase the innate place of women as caregivers and only caregivers. With the blanket statement “[men and women’s] functions are different,” Abbott reiterates and confirms his stance on this issue. Often times he repeats himself, first stating, “The first and most patent fact in the family is the difference in the sexes,” with the subsequent paragraph beginning with, “The difference in the sexes is the first and fundamental fact in the family,” following with “because their functions are different.” His entire argument only addresses a separation of the sexes, describing it, but never explaining it to his audience. The only explanation that Abbott briefly mentions is that with different functions, equality between men and women is unobtainable, and thus “all talk of equality or non-equality is idle words without a meaning” (Abbott). With this repetition of preserving the family, Abbott exemplifies the parallel of suffrage to innumerable threats to social order, one of the main antisuffrage ideologies.

Not only does Abbott combat fears of society, but he also comments on arguments that suffragists themselves made. Abbott states, “From such an encounter of wills woman instinctively shrinks,” creating a sense of biological inferiority towards women with a biased preconceived notion of how they will react in political situations (Abbott). Near the end of his address, Abbott argues:

[Here] is the negative reason why woman does not wish the ballot: she does not wish to engage in that conflict of wills which is the essence of politics; she does not wish to assume the responsibility for protecting person and property which is the essence of government. The affirmative reason is that she has other, and in some sense, more important work to do. (Abbott)

In these sentences, Abbott completely disregards the suffrage capability arguments, specifically Maria Stewart, that state that women are indeed at the very least interested in these topics but do not have the opportunity to engage. In this defamatory paragraph, Abbott disregards the potential and intelligence that women possess. He instead, talking to males, manipulates his audience to believe these statements that women have no interest in government. Here, Abbott uses soothing tone mimics a mother scolding a child, guiding the naivety of suffragists and their sympathizers to a more realistic viewpoint. In this statement, Abbott reemphasizes the point that women do not want to vote because they are biologically different and thus “do not wish to engage in that conflict,” as it is unfit for her role in society (Abbott). This familiarity that Abbott uses is genius to an early twentieth century audience, which was continually exposed to corruption and change. Thus, Abbott emerges as true, calm, and steadfast in his address.

The entire existence of human life, according to antisuffrage sentiments, seen in Lyman Abbott’s address, is dependent upon women staying true to household duties: “What are we in the world for? The family.” If women were to abandon her womanly duties and stray from their rightful place, chaos would ensue, and life as society knows it would be wrecked in havoc. Abbott ends his discourse with the idea that “[women] must choose” that it is her choice in the path she wishes to embark on (Abbott). Thus, women are biologically destined to be mothers and only pawns of the household, an ideal that antisuffragists held to heart. However, again it is

ambiguous as to whom he is speaking to: women or men. If it is women, it is patronizing, as he is demanding that a woman herself is her own captor. If it is men, he's talking to an insider group of men who hold this ideology who do not have any agency.

Abbott ends his argument stating, "If she were to go into politics, she would leave undone the work for which alone government exists, or she would distract her energies from that work, which she knows full well requires them all. Can she not do both? No! ...She must choose" (Abbott). This indicates that women have a choice in this very constricted, no-other-alternative life. He calmly states throughout his prose that suffrage would be an added burden not just to women but also to society as a whole, causing women to neglect their existing duties. This would be a disastrous catastrophe to the entire order of society. This sort of rhetorical discourse is very effective, as, while the turn of the century brought about new innovations, change, and advances, many people were still skeptical of its outcomes.

One advantage that antisuffrage discourse and rhetoric had over its counterpart was the fact that antisuffragists utilized the fact that the two opposing sides were in a constant back and fourth interplay where the antisuffragists continually used the 'evident' failings of the suffragists to their advantage. "The Wrong of Suffrage" by Heloise Jamison was published in the *American Woman's Journal* in May of 1894 (Jamison 1-4). Jamison's opening statement of her discourse states, "The brave and steady old-time defenders of woman's enfranchisement have added little to their argument for thirty years" (Jamison 1). Here Jamison employs a different tactic than her colleagues by not stating reasons why citizens should vote with her but instead attacks her opponent. She follows this by commenting, "their aim certainly is worthy of regard; is their reasoning true?" (Jamison 1). Jamison provides her audience with a very linear manifestation of numerous faults in the 'suff's' multiple arguments, with the strongest being "What proof have they that out of the voting power alone can come industrial liberty?" (Jamison 2). Her entire

discourse is condensed to the lies, faults, and miscommunications that the suffragists mislead their audience. The accumulation of Jamison's argument lies in her last paragraph, where she moves past degrading the opposition to her argument and provides her audience with logical and formative rhetoric that is fundamentally honest and convincing. She elevates women to such a high position, articulating to the population that antisuffragists are not against women but instead view her with the highest esteem: "woman's place is in the forefront of life, that of the family and of the nation. The destiny of the race is in her hands. God and man have placed it there...every power is in her wake" (Jamison 4). Other antisuffragists have expressed this ideal, but Jamison's rhetoric is a manifestation of the position that antisuffragists attempt to display on their attitude towards women to their audience. She ends with the final note, "let us remember and prize the fact that we have the right not to vote" (Jamison 4). Jamison manipulates her audience to believe that men have been doing women a favor by taking "the brunt of the world's work," and for this, women should praise and thank men for allowing women to *not* vote.

Antisuffrage rhetoric was a discourse that spanned over seventy years and setback women enfranchisement for decades. The three arguments listed above only lightly grazed the surface of hundreds of articles, newspaper clippings, public addresses, and distributed pamphlets that are infused with this time. However, these three arguments are the forerunners as they give the strongest resistance to enfranchisement.

Conclusion

I came to this topic after I came across a quote that changed the way I viewed history by Sandi Toksvig that stated:

When I was a student at Cambridge I remember an anthropology professor holding up a picture of a bone with 28 incisions carved in

it. “This is often considered to be man’s first attempt at a calendar” she explained. She paused as we dutifully wrote this down. ‘My question to you is this – what man needs to mark 28 days? I would suggest to you that this is woman’s first attempt at a calendar.’ It was a moment that changed my life. In that second I stopped to question almost everything I had been taught about the past. How often had I overlooked women’s contributions? (Toksvig)

From this, I became interested in parts of parts of women’s history that had sadly been overlooked by scholars and history books. My thesis initially began as an analysis of lesser-known nonfiction rhetoric during the first wave of feminism; it quickly spiraled into an analysis of a completely overlooked portion of suffrage rhetoric that I was not aware of. In surveying the rhetoric between the years of 1848-1919, I came to the conclusion that two opposing rhetorics, suffrage and antisuffrage, valued women in a time where the entire half of the population had been previously overlooked. While ultimately suffrage rhetoric triumphed with the passage of women’s voting rights with the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, antisuffrage rhetoric emerged as equally vital, captivating, and eloquent. The two opposing discourses of this era, while ultimately arguing two different end goals, allow for perplexing similarities between the groups of political rivals. They argued for opposing results while still using similar organizational structures, mentalities toward women, and rhetorical strategies.

Both discourses were swimming against a powerful tide, and thus needed security that would help combat their rivals. This security meant privileged members. Both suffrage and antisuffrage organizations “consistently identify its leadership as women of privilege,” with as much as “forty percent” of an organization’s leadership belonged to the upper class (Marshall 17). The homogeneity found among suffrage and antisuffrage leadership equated to a shared

kinship and thus often overlapping arguments. The existing rhetoric depicts the trials and worries of such privileged women and consequently leaves out the opinions of lower class women of this time. Thus, many rhetors tried to overcome this separation between privileged leadership and general public. While many rhetors tried to identify with the audience, such as suffragist Isabella Beecher Hooker, who identified her audience as her “friends” eleven times as well as antisuffragist Lyman Abbott, who used the phrase “we” thirty times in his speech, this bond only related to their peers, artificial in terms of the entire female population. Compared to the general public, rhetors from both groups were entitled, creating a discourse that advocated for the rights of women from all backgrounds but was ultimately separated from it.

The ultimate goals were different, with antisuffragists being “conservative and reactive...aimed at maintaining the nineteenth-century ideal of the woman in the home and the man in the world” (Marshall 93). In direct contrast, the goal of suffragists was to “undermine women’s subordination in all its many manifestations” (DuBois 9). However, even though they were fighting for a different end result, many of suffrage and antisuffrage arguments were the same, wanting to protect women, ultimately desiring to better their lives. Consequently, many arguments between the two discourses overlapped, seemingly stating the same thing while arguing for different end results. Suffragists and antisuffragists used the same evidence for different arguments, creating an interwoven discourse. Often times, they completely contradict one another, as seen in the separate spheres argument which states that women are emotionally different than men, yet suffragists use this to their power instead of as a drawback that antisuffragists use.

Lucretia Mott fought for the continued implementation of a separate sphere of men and women, and antisuffrage rhetoric used this as a foundation, especially seen in Lyman Abbott’s address. Often, some “suffragists downplayed the universalistic argument of natural rights in

favor of a more traditional belief in inherent gender differences;" similarly, antisuffragists fought for the realization that women were inherently different than men, seen in the biological argument of Lyman Abbott (Marshall 10). Similarities between suffrage and antisuffrage rhetoric continued into the strategies of the speeches, as each side used "essential feminine characteristics to pursue different political goals," of which include tying in personal stories and anecdotes to identify with the audience (Marshall 11). In a broader sense, the two rival rhetorics had to continually play off of one another and use each other's arguments to their advantage, which is what Heloise Jamison did when she continually attacked suffrage rhetoric. Ultimately, suffragists argued for revolutionary change with the aim of bettering women's lives, and antisuffragists argued for stagnant continuance with the same aim of bettering women's lives.

Even though antisuffrage literature seems almost barbaric to a present day reader, it was a necessity. Grace Duffield Goodwin declared, "The ballot is not a right denied; it is a burden removed" (Marshall 98). By all accounts set forth by modern day rationality, suffrage, with its extensive arguments that spanned from ability to rights decreed by legal documents, should have been a presumed victory. However, what soon followed the rise of suffrage literature came a backlash so great it delayed women enfranchisement for over seventy years. The antisuffrage discourse that emerged was often filled with fallacies, including Josephine Pearson's statement in her "Why We Oppose Votes for Women" that stated "there is no reason to believe [the ballot] would be more effectual in the hands of women." A lack of evidence does not equate to truth, yet this is the argument that Pearson relies on. However, even with the holes that were inevitably present in antisuffrage discourse, in my opinion, it perpetuated an almost greater and stronger argument than that of its counterpart. With one organization, The National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage, claiming membership of "over 700,000" members, there is no doubt that this was a very close battle that almost did not end with the passage of the nineteenth

Amendment (Marshall 5). The antisuffragists both created a new discourse while also attacking a preceding one: “they deemed suffragists’ unladylike demands as portents of economic, political, and social upheaval” (Marshall 103). With this continual attack on suffragists, antisuffragists manipulated the minds of citizens by turning submission into a patriotic duty and self-sacrifice as a noble virtue, thus distributing a rhetoric that was male supremacy based. Even with all of these violations, antisuffrage rhetoric soared. In my opinion, this is due to the fundamental nature of their argument. Suffragists had to go against cultural norms that had been in place for centuries. On the other hand, antisuffragists had to simply reiterate the values of society held by most of the conservative population and had to justify stability instead of advocate change. Thus, their arguments came much more naturally and were less farfetched to a nineteenth century audience. However, even with their easier arguments, clearer rhetoric, and understandable strategies, women suffrage triumphed, allowing equality for women that continues today.

Even though this can be deemed as a “failure” in rhetoric, antisuffrage rhetoric made considerable contributions to the dialogue concerning women’s rights that acknowledged their larger place in society. Overall, the suffrage movement, which encompassed both suffrage and antisuffrage rhetoric, expanded the role of women. The examination of an overlooked rhetoric and comparison of its effectiveness to its suffrage counterpart exposes a rich, historical era that serves an ironic testimony to feminist assertions of social and legal equality.

Appendix

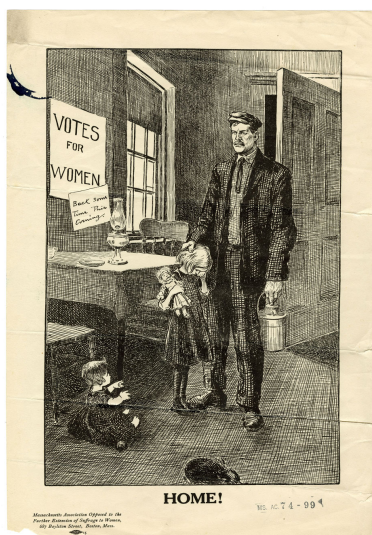


Figure 1. Political Cartoon by Josephine A. Pearson
Pearson, Josephine A. *Home!* Digital image.

[Http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33902.jpg](http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33902.jpg). Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d. Web.

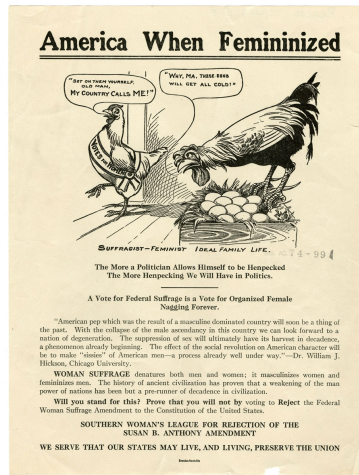


Figure 2. Political Cartoon by Josephine A. Pearson
 Pearson, Josephine A. *America When Feminized*. Digital image.
[Http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33888.jpg](http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33888.jpg). Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d. Web.



Figure 3. Political Cartoon by Laura E. Foster
 Foster, Laura E. *Looking Backward*. Digital image.
[Http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.02940/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.02940/). Library of Congress, 22 Aug. 1912. Web.

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